This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

+13

The
Gordon Lester Ford
Collection
Presented by his Sons
Worthington Chauncey Ford
and
Paul Leicester Ford
to the
New York Public Library.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Ferguson
Ferguson, Va
Digitized by Google
A1

Digitized by Google

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

Digitized by Google

Stuart Pinx.

F. Smith Sculp.

CHILDHOOD.

Published by L.C. Bowles. Boston.

Digitized by Google

MY EARLY DAYS.

BY WALTER FERGUSON, ESQ.

THIRD EDITION.

BOSTON:
LEONARD C. BOWLES.

1831.

Digitized by Google

PUBLIC LIBRARY
152580
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
1899.

Digitized by Google

TO

MY NEPHEWS,

ALLAN AND WALTER,

FOR WHOSE INSTRUCTION IT IS WRITTEN,

I DEDICATE

THIS SKETCH.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MY EARLY DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

I HAVE no distinct recollection of the facts and feelings of my existence previous to the sixth year. Distance has given to the occurrences of that period a vague and vapory remembrance, like the dimness of a dream. I have a faint idea, of faces that smiled upon me which I have never seen again, and of a home resembling not that where I spent my after hours; but of these things I am by no means positive. I possess only a painful certainty of a temporary blindness produced by the small-pox, and the fatigues of a journey made in my mother's arms during a winter storm.

Allan Ferguson, my father, was a Scottish clergyman, a dissenter from the established form of his country's faith. Devoted, with heart and soul, to the cause in which he had

Digitized by Google

engaged, he bade adieu to his native land, for the purpose of aiding the faithful few, that, amidst danger and privation, caused the seeds of the Gospel to rise and ripen on the shores of Ireland. He was appointed colleague to an old clergyman, who held the congregation of B——, a large seaport town in the north of that country. There he first beheld, and was united to, my mother. She was the only daughter, though not the only child, of a rich merchant, named Maxwell. At the house of her aunt, an amiable and religious woman, she became acquainted with my father. Gentle affections and similarity of sentiment produced between them a feeling of esteem, which gradually grew into one still more endearing. An explanation ensued. After some delay, the church joined their hands—their hearts required no formal union. The happiness of the wedded pair would have been completely without alloy, had not old Mr Maxwell, whose love of money and ideas of family consequence made him averse to the match,—though he refused not his assent, withheld his daughter's fortune.

The income of a dissenting clergyman's assistant was, of course, very, very limited. My

Digitized by Google

father's mode of life was, however, habitually simple; and my mother's, by inclination, no less so. The kind relative, who had been the means of their meeting, and who did all she could to facilitate their union, insisted on their making her house their home, until it pleased Providence to produce a change in their humble fortunes. Among beings of such a cast no reserve existed, or could exist. Accordingly, the proposal was accepted as frankly as it was made. The delicate attentions of this estimable woman—the fond fidelity of a beloved companion, ingenious in devising a thousand little plans to make him happy—that unrestrained freedom of communication which can only exist among the pure of heart—the calm and constant recurrence of religious duties, and the total absence of worldly interference, which ever taints what it touches, gave to this period of his existence a holy charm, which rendered it very dear to the memory of my father. To make the bond of sweet society still more complete, my birth took place. I was born on the first of August, eleven months after the marriage of my parents. They gave me the name of Walter, from my maternal grandfather. My mother thought to propitiate his stern temper

Digitized by Google

by this device of affection, and made it her request. On the birth of a girl, two years afterwards, she smilingly insisted that her husband should use a like privilege. He thanked her with a playful kiss, and called the infant Mary. It was my mother's name; and he said it was the name of all others the dearest to his heart.

Six years glided by since their wedding-day, and we were still residents at B——. The death of a boy, who was taken from us, without knowing that he left a world of sin and sorrow behind him, was the only incident that broke in upon our domestic quiet. Considerations, however, arose which proved that a change of temporal situation, however painful it might be, was at all events a thing of necessity. Circumstances detained my father much longer than he originally contemplated, under the roof of her who had so hospitably received him. He deemed it incumbent on him, as a Christian and a man, to delay no longer calculating on uncertainties, but instantly to seek for some place, permanent and independent, however limited that independence might chance to be. In leaving the generous woman who had been so instrumental to his happiness, and the flock over whom he had watch-

Digitized by Google

ed for years, he anticipated many a bitter pang; but it was very obvious, to his understanding and his heart, that the improvement of his fortunes kept not pace with the growth of his children; and the duty of a parent was esteemed by him far too sacred to allow a moment's trifling with their future hopes. From Mr Maxwell he had no expectations. Continued neglect seemed to show that he had forgotten his having ever had a daughter. The peculiarity of his situation, as colleague to the clergyman of B——, held out no positive prospect on which he could rely with certainty. He therefore accepted a call from the congregation of Glen-O, distant above forty miles from his present residence.

After undergoing the regular forms of ordination, it was necessary that he should immediately enter on the duties of his pastoral charge. He was therefore obliged to remove his little family, although it was now winter. We commenced our journey in the middle of December, and I have yet a strong recollection of the circumstances connected with it. The vehicle on which we rode was a rude car, intended for agricultural purposes, furnished with long cushions, stuffed with straw, placed

Digitized by Google

on each side for the ease of those it carried. The horse was poor, and his color of a sickly grey. My father acted as driver, occupying one side of the car, with my sister, a stout little girl, warmly wrapped in the folds of his great-coat; while I, who was still suffering from the effects of illness, sat on my mother's knee, encircled by her arms. I particularly remember the features of a female, advanced in years, who, as she folded a large shawl around my mother's neck, appeared to be weeping bitterly. As we travelled on our way, the sun broke through the thick clouds at noon. His cheerless beam falling on our sorry vehicle, and the wintry wastes through which we journeyed, seemed more in mockery of the lorn-looking wanderers, than in sympathy with the desolate aspect of the scene around them. Towards evening the rain fell in torrents. In spite of the cakes my mother gave me, and the sweet songs she sung to soothe me, I cried and was dissatisfied. At length I fell asleep, and had the good fortnne to continue so, until we reached the only place where it was possible for us to pass the night. Of this I have no remembrance, save that there was a blazing fire, around which many strange faces

Digitized by Google

were assembled, and that in carrying me to bed, I was borne up a ladder. The next morning saw us again on our way. The violence of the rain-fall had given place to light misty showers, against which our travelling dresses formed a sufficient protection. Our road lay alternately through swampy tracts of peat-moss, and through drear and difficult defiles among the hills. During the early part of the day, the various districts of the country through which we passed, seemed almost destitute of the habitations of man. A wreath of smoke, arising from some miserable cabin, and a naked thorn, occasionally observable by the way-side, were the only visible traces of human life and vegetation. As the day advanced, our path, which had been more or less an ascending one from its commencement, suddenly assumed a contrary course, and sloped rapidly downwards. We began to perceive marks of cultivation and improvement. Plantations, through whose leafless branches the mountain rivulets, swollen by the winter waters, were discernible in the distance, occupied the summits of the rising grounds. A farm-house, whitewashed and neatly thatched, now and then peered through the gloom of a

Digitized by Google

December twilight. I had closed my eyes, and composed myself to rest on my mother's bosom, when the motion of the car ceased, and I heard my father, with a cheering voice, welcome us to our future home.

The village of Glen-O, which had in us received an addition to its small community, was situated in a most romantic part of the north coast, about five miles from the sea. Its site bore an exact resemblance to a horse-shoe. In the rear were high sloping grounds, parcelled out into various fantastic forms, and cultivated as gardens. On the right and left, rose hills steep and abrupt, crested with forest trees and shrubs. Through these wound a rustic road of so rude a construction as to bear a very striking similitude to the deserted bed of a mountain-torrent. The village looked towards the sea. The lands which intervened with gentle swellings between it and the beach, were managed with considerable skill, and possessed the reputation of more than ordinary fertility. By far the greater part of its inhabitants, and the more respectable portion of the farming classes in its neighbourhood, were the descendants of Scottish colonists—either soldiers of fortune, who sought a set-

Digitized by Google

tlement with the sword in this distracted country, or pious and persecuted men, who fled hither for refuge from the troubles of their own. It was a favorite point, in the policy of the proprietors of the Glen-O estate, to promote the interests and meet the wishes of these people, as far as was in any degree compatible with their own immediate views of personal advantage. In opposition to the character of the native Irish, they were a race distinguished by habits of sobriety, frugality, and industry—slow to promise, but faithful to the letter of their engagement. Accordingly, their farms were leased out on fair and equitable principles; and, on many occasions, their suggestions or remonstrances were listened to with an attention not usually granted by an Irish landlord to his inferior tenantry. The consequences resulting from this, were, the regular payment of the stipulated rent, the improvement of the grounds, and the increasing prosperity of the inhabitants of Glen-O.

My father's congregation consisted of about a hundred and twenty families, from the village and its vicinity. The place of worship, a plain patriarchal-looking building, was the gift of one of the old proprietors to the

Digitized by Google

primitive settlers. To this the present landlord had added a pleasant cot, with a few acres of excellent land, free of rent, for the use of the resident minister, which, with thirtyfive pounds a-year, promised and paid by the members of his flock, (for the dissenting clergy of Ireland were not then in government pay,) constituted the sum total of all my father's emoluments from his new appointment. And for this he thanked his God, and proved the sincerity of his gratitude by contentment.

CHAPTER II.

WINTER, with its wet days and weary nights, passed away. Spring, proclaiming the resurrection of nature, came scattering the snowdrop and the primrose over his fairy track; and the tide of circumstances continued to run smoothly with the pastor of Glen-O and his fireside circle. Habits of economy, and the kindness of his friends, enabled him to stock his little farm to advantage. In converse with his Maker, his people, his books, and his fields, (for even with things inanimate, wis-

Digitized by Google

dom can hold communion,) the mornings and evenings of his existence passed away, without any of that weariness of life which he only feels who knows not how to appreciate its blessings. There was nothing good to which he did not attach a proper value. The moonlight, —the sunshine,—the varying seasons,—the overflowing cup,—the furnished table,—and the healthful flow of life in his temperate frame—were to him so many treats from which he ever took occasion to inculcate lessons of praise and thankfulness.

Every member of our family was regarded by the good people of the country with sincere affection. They vied with each other in paying us a thousand minute attentions, indicative of kindness and good-will. My sister and I were great favorites among the honest villagers; and, during our summer rambles, we seldom returned home, without receiving a regular tribute of fruits and flowers. The lightness of heart that sprung from these childish enjoyments,—the invigorating influence of unrestrained exercise, the genial glow of the summer sunbeams, whose presence was rendered still more pleasing by our proximity to the sea—contributed greatly to strengthen

Digitized by Google

my constitution, considerably debilitated by the more than ordinary sufferings I experienced from the diseases incident to childhood. Owing to the weakness which succeeded these, I had never been subjected to any regular species of education. At a very early age, my mother imprinted the Lord's Prayer on my memory, which was remarkably susceptible; and this, with a few Psalms, constituted my entire stock of acquired information. I had now, however, reached my sixth birthday, and I was formally placed under the direction of my mother, to receive those introductory instructions which, imbibed from the lips we love, possess far more of softness than asperity.

I can yet fancy that I see my beloved preceptress sitting—as many a time she did in the calm evenings, on the rustic bench, which my father's ingenuity had constructed in front of our cottage, and which, on that account, was doubly dear to her—the rosy-cheeked girl at her foot, plucking the tops off the daises that grew around her,—the half-smiling, half-serious look of ill-repressed affection which I received, when, with the arch cunning natural to childhood, I wilfully misunderstood my les-

Digitized by Google

sons, that I might have the pleasure of hearing her repeat them,—my father, at the open window, occasionally lifting his eyes from the book in which he was reading,—the delighted glance of intelligence that passed between them when my boyish prattle happened on some observation uncommon at my years, and the fond kiss that followed that glance; these are among the number of those sacred recollections on which memory loves to linger to the last hour of our being.

The progress of the young pupil, under a teacher so much after his own heart, could not be slow. Gratitude, and the desire of exceeding my dear parent's expectations, by doing something to surprise her, for which I was ever sure to be rewarded, caused me, on many occasions, to compass things beyond the reach of common diligence. During the year, through the whole of which I remained under her immediate care, I acquired a knowledge of the leading features of the Christian religion, was capable of giving an outline of the principal events in scripture history, and could read distinctly, without the awkward habits and vicious pronunciation of those educated in country schools. There was nothing miraculous in all this. Many

Digitized by Google

boys have acquired information more speedily than I did. It was my mother's great object that I should learn nothing that I did not understand. Haste was with her a secondary consideration. She was resolved that I should not load my memory with a burthen of mere terms, of whose written forms and articulated sounds I might form some idea, but whose relative and absolute meaning I could neither explain nor comprehend. I imagined that there was nothing in the world a secret to her who taught me all I knew. I was continually asking questions, many of them, of course, very foolish ones; but she whom I addressed never failed to give me an instructive answer.

An event took place about this time, which every one who takes the trouble of reflecting on his boyish days, will readily conceive to have excited no ordinary sensations at the period of its occurrence. The son of a neighbouring farmer made me a present of a pretty cage and a beautiful goldfinch. The little creature had been long tamed to its wiry prison, and, as liberty would have availed it little, I thought there was no harm in retaining it a captive. This bird sung sweetly, and was the delight of my heart. With what

Digitized by Google

pride, as its sole proprietor, have I expatiated to my sister on the beauty of its red crown and golden wings! Its cage being near the window of the apartment where I slept, seemed to have been placed there as an antidote against indolence. My morning dreams were regularly broken by the merry notes of its sweet natural music. It was my particular privilege to give it the daily allowance of hempseed and water; for which I was always repaid by a grateful chirrup. In return, I vowed that none should ever minister to its wants but its own dear Walter.

The hay-making season arrived: I obtained permission to play in the meadows for a whole day. How delightful!—I was up with the sun. The laborers were just going to their work. I had scarcely time to get my straw-hat. My spirits were all in a flutter. At this moment, Robin, our old good-natured ploughman, chanced to catch my eye as he passed down the lane, with a pitchfork on his shoulder. I could wait no longer. The meadows had taken possession of my whole soul, and my poor bird was for the first time forgotten.

I came home, tired and half asleep. All the night long I dreamt of nothing but larks,

Digitized by Google

and haycocks, and our ploughman Robin. The next day my mother, guessing my fatigue, would not disturb me. I did not arise till noon. I felt hungry, yet I could not eat; I was listless and dissatisfied, yet I knew not why. I stole out to the garden, and began to read at the foot of a gooseberry-bush. At a little distance there was a tall cherry-tree, on which a green-linnet commenced singing its dull monotonous note. A boy of my acquaintance possessed one of these birds, and prized it highly. I wondered at his fondness. 'Ah!' thought I, 'if he but heard my Cherub.'—— At that instant I remembered all. I rushed into the house, but death had been there before me.

My unhappy favorite was strangled between the wires of his cage, making vain attempts to escape the starvation caused by my cruel neglect. I saw for the first time, what it was to die. He would never more sing his merry morning-song, nor flutter his pretty plumes, for an unkind master. 'What shall I do?' I cried, 'I have killed it! I have killed it!' 'You have indeed, Walter,' said my mother; 'and let this, your first act of injustice, and your first feeling of misfortune, warn you

Digitized by Google

ever after from sacrificing those you love to the selfish pursuit of personal pleasure.' Her large blue eyes glistened as she spoke; and I recollect the tone and the look, with which she pronounced these words, as vividly as if the whole had been but an affair of yesterday.

I did not soon forget the fate of poor Cherub: it preyed upon my spirits for many a day. I made all the atonement in my power for past cruelty; but, like the world in which I now live, I became kind to the injured being at the moment when kindness could avail it nothing. I dug him a grave beneath the loveliest rose-bush in all our garden. I watered the fresh turf with my tears; and, in the purity and simplicity of childish penitence, when I knelt, as was my custom, to morning and evening prayer, I breathed his name, and begged to be forgiven.

CHAPTER III.

I HAD been almost a year under my mother's instructions. The clergymen, who assisted on the last sacramental occasion, expressed them-

Digitized by Google

selves highly gratified by my progress. And, previous to placing me under the teacher of the village, it was settled, that a festival in honor of my past improvement, should be celebrated on my approaching birth-day. What a proud tribute to youthful industry and obedience!—I question much whether Sylla, Marius, Cæsar, Pompey, or any other of the renowned men of blood, ever enjoyed a greater glow of heart in the hour of their triumphs than I did, as the day drew near which was to bear public testimony to my filial piety, and my acquisitions in learning. At all events, I am very sure they did not possess half so pure a one. The first of August at length arrived. All the children of an age similar to my own, belonging to the principal members of my father's congregation, were invited. The pastor of Glen-O, while he was careful in feeding the sheep, did not neglect the lambs. He had personally initiated the young members of his flock in the first principles of religion; and he was particularly watchful, that those who could not receive instructions at home, should be constant in their attendance at school. They assembled at our house on the morning of the great day,—some of them accompanied by their parents.

Digitized by Google

My father commenced by singing the eighth Psalm, in which he was joined by all present. After this, he read an appropriate portion of Scripture, and prayed with solemnity and fervor. He then proceeded to give his youthful audience a correct view of their religious duties, founding his observations on that beautiful chapter of Ecclesiastes,—'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.'—He taught us to comprehend the nature of our relation to an Almighty Father, by illustrations taken from the history of our earthly connexions. He exhibited, by familiar, but forcible examples, the boundlessness of that love which a God of unchanging purity entertains for a wicked and wandering race; and he caused our young bosoms to beat with tender emotions of awe, delight, and gratitude, as he dwelt upon the character of that mild and matchless Being, who hath said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

After concluding his discourse, he proceeded to ask general questions on the different subjects with which we were supposed to be ac-

Digitized by Google

quainted. The answers were as correct as could reasonably be expected from our years and opportunities. Our examinator professed himself perfectly satisfied. The party was now arranged in two rows, and I was desired to stand in the centre. I took my place in a sort of pleasant confusion. My mother stood by my side, and addressed the little assembly. She stated that, as the guardian of my education up to that hour, she came forward publicly to express her marked approbation of the attention, with which I had received her instructions, and the industry by which I converted them to their proper use. 'As a son,' said she, 'his conduct has been dutiful and affectionate; and now, that he is about to be transferred to an abler teacher, I trust that his perseverance in a virtuous career will enable that individual to bear a testimony similar to mine, when they are parted on some future day.' She ceased speaking, and, leaving the apartment for an instant, returned, bringing with her a pocket-bible, bound in morocco and elegantly ornamented.—'This is a mother's gift, Walter, and few could give you a better.' —She placed the book in my hand, and, opening it, desired me to read the words to which

Digitized by Google

she pointed, written on one of the blank-leaves, and executed with the pen in the style of printing. They were as follows :—

A MOTHER'S GIFT.

Remember, love, who gave thee this,
When other days shall come;
When she, who had thy earliest kiss,
Sleeps in her narrow home.
Remember 't was a mother gave
The gift to one she 'd die to save.

That mother sought a pledge of love
The holiest for her son;
And from the gifts of God above
She chose a goodly one.
She chose, for her beloved boy,
The source of light, and life, and joy.—

And bade him keep the gift,—that, when
The parting hour would come,
They might have hope to meet again
In an eternal home.
She said his faith in that would be
Sweet incense to her memory.

And should the scoffer, in his pride,
Laugh that fond faith to scorn,
And bid him cast the pledge aside,
That he from youth had borne,
She bade him pause, and ask his breast,
If he, or she, had loved him best.

Digitized by Google

A parent's blessing on her son
Goes with this holy thing;
The love that would retain the one,
Must to the other cling.
Remember 't is no idle toy,
A mother's gift—Remember, boy!

As I concluded reading, a perfect stillness reigned through the room. The children, awed by the impressive looks of their elders, did not move a lip. My father, leaning back in his large chair, covered his face with his left hand; his right, resting on his knee, gently pressed the long white fingers of my mother. I caught her mild glance as she kept gazing steadfastly upon me. She drew me towards her with a loving smile. My sister Mary was hanging by her skirt. She kissed us both tenderly, and, joining our little hands, placed them between my father's and her own. The good man arose slowly from his seat, giving the signal for prayer. He offered up the sacrifice of a pure spirit at the altar of divine grace. He invoked a blessing on the two or three who had met together in their Creator's name. He prayed that the love which pervaded that humble family might become general amongst men; that the time would soon arrive when unhappy distinctions and dissensions should entirely disappear, and

Digitized by Google

the sons and daughters of Adam would assemble in the house of their God as the children of one all-mighty and all-merciful Parent. The duties of the morning were at an end. We now proceeded to join in the amusements which had been allotted for our entertainment.

My father conversed with the old people: my mother mingled in our sports, assisting in the management of the various projects we had on foot, and keeping us in a continual flow of good humor. We dined at a separate table, and our plain repast was conducted with great decorum. After dinner, we adjourned to the garden, where, elevated on a seat of turf, I treated my young friends to a dessert of newly-gathered fruits. The rest of the company collected around us, to witness our happiness. A good-humored farmer, who played a little on the violin, proposed to send for his instrument, if the minister would permit us to dance. My father cheerfully consented. He saw no harm, he said, in youth and innocence taking a healthful exercise, to the sound of a lively air. For such as we were he thought dancing a fitting pastime. He would not, however, make it an important branch of education, as was the

Digitized by Google

custom in towns and cities. The return of the messenger, despatched for the inspiring instrument, broke off his observations. We commenced, like a band of fairy elves, to trip it on the green. What was wanted in grace we made up in merriment. We laughed and leapt about, rudely enough to be sure; but in our movements, however wild, there lay no mischief; and our mirth, though boisterous, arose not mingled with another's pain. Not one of our whole troop had ever heard the names of the stately minuet, or the luxurious waltz; but, in the innocence of our artless bosoms, there lay a moral grace and harmony which are not always found in the voluptuous mazes of the fashionable dance. The evening waned apace. The stars saluted us gaily through the branches of the spreading sycamores, and our friends rose to depart. I gave the adieu to my companions with affectionate regret. I continued calling good night! good night! until their figures, one by one, disappeared entirely in the distance. The details of this important day overpowered me: I retired hastily to bed—sleep soon closed my eyes, and voices of other spheres, and forms of seraphic beauty, such as are only granted to the holy visions of taintless infancy, floated around my couch.

CHAPTER IV.

I was now fated to become a daily absentee from home, from a home that had been to me a little paradise. The day arrived on which I was to make my first appearance at school. My father was writing my name, the year, and the day of the month, in a new treatise on arithmetic; my mother was just finishing a satchel of green stuff, destined for my use; and, much as I wished to conceal my feelings, yet I could not help looking on the preparations for my changing destiny with a heavy heart. In spite of my endeavours to hide it, my agitation was observed. My kind mother was in no hurry to finish the satchel. The cuckoo-clock, whose voice never appeared impertinent until then, proclaimed the hour. My father, the most punctual of men, stated his intention of escorting me immediately. He added, in a soothing voice, that, for the purpose of assisting in the commencement of my labors, he would remain with me during the remainder of the day. All was ready. In addition to my books, I received a store of cakes and fruits, granted me with no sparing hand.

Digitized by Google

Whether my mother had lost her usual skill, or was more difficult to please this morning, I know not, but she made a great many alterations in my dress, and displayed more solicitude about it than I had ever seen her do before. The ribbon, tied under my chin, she bound and unbound a dozen times: even at the door she detained me, for the purpose of adjusting my frill; and little Mary, having expressed a desire to walk, she acceded to her wishes, and accompanied us until we were distant but a few paces from the modest mansion sacred to learning, and the education of her son.

The school-house of Glen-O, the only temple of Minerva that existed in the valley, was as unobtrusive and primitive a fabric as ever it pleased the arts and sciences to pitch upon for their residence. In the dashing style of our more modern seminaries, it had been conducted on the most approved principles during a period of thirty years—that length of time having elapsed since it was opened under its present master, who, in the discharge of his delicate and important office, acquitted himself to the entire satisfaction of the good people by whom he was surrounded. To give a clear idea of its situation, it is necessary to state, that

Digitized by Google

the minister's house did not, like the village, possess a full front view of the country towards the sea. The village, when viewed from our door, appeared to the right. On the left were the meeting-house, the open grounds, and the slight blue hills that screened the view of ocean. Our residence was elevated on a gentle acclivity, along whose base lay a road in good repair, leading to the mill, the school-house, my father's chapel, Fort-Maurice the family-seat of our landlord, and the extended sea-beach. A private path, for the clergyman's sole use, ran in the rear of our house, crossing a rustic bridge, thrown over the stream that supplied the mill, and winding among trees and shrubs, until it reached the chapel-grounds and our farm-fields, which lay beside them. It there terminated. On an extensive level eminence, commanding a noble view of a landscape, where sublimity and beauty struggled for the mastery, you were at once saluted by the simple academy of rural instruction, and the unadorned temple of village-worship, without porch, or pillar, or cupola, or steeple, or aught to increase their authority, or extend their influence, save the unpretending sincerity of a few devoted people who had resolved to 'fear God, and keep his commandments.'

Digitized by Google

The gate that opened on these hallowed haunts of learning and religion, was supported on the massive stems of two old trees of the mountain-ash, that grew about six feet asunder. It was painted pure white, and, by a particular decree of the elders, its virgin coat was renewed every spring. The school-house, which was to the right as you entered, literally enjoyed a green old age. The ivy and the honeysuckle, folding their verdant arms around its walls, seemed emulous in giving every corner of the matronly mansion a share of their caresses. The interior was divided into two apartments; one, large, well-aired, and lighted, having the forms, tables, desk, and chair of state, usual in a country school-room; the other, small, with a single window, whose diamond-shaped panes and leaden sash contrived to keep, even in the clear days of summer, a kind of perpetual twilight, that ever excited a visionary awe in the curious stripling, who indulged in a presumptuous peep at the secrets of this mysterious sanctuary. It contained, after all, but little to gratify the inquisitive glance of youth. The congregational register, the sacramental service, the books and varied literary apparatus of the teacher, compo-

Digitized by Google

sed all its treasures. Such is, as nearly as I can recollect, the appearance of the spot where the sons and daughters of simplicity flocked for instruction. I have often reflected on it in after days, and I have thought that the peculiarity of its situation might be construed into an emblem of singular beauty. The humble tabernacle rising in front of the school-house,—the lonely burial-field lying in shadow behind its walls—made it appear as if education were directing the eye of the young spirit to fix its gaze on heaven, while it silently pointed to the temple of the Lord, and the mouldering dust of slumbering forefathers.

Never did human figure harmonize more completely with a scene in still life, than the honest instructer of the children of Glen-O with the scene set apart as the sphere of his undisputed sovereignty. Master James Fleming—or, as he was officially designated by all the country, the Master—was just the kind of man one would wish to meet in such a place. The school-house and he seemed formed for each other; both in their physiognomy and in their relative situations there lay a strong resemblance. The master's years had left above fiftyfive notches in time's calendar; but

Digitized by Google

his long grey locks still retained traces of the curls of youth, and his cheek yet preserved a warm tone of color, derived from temperate habits, good humor, and a sound constitution. He left Scotland, when a young man, with the predecessor of my father. By his own exertions, he acquired a considerable share of education. His great aim and object were to become a clergyman; but even the very moderate means necessary to complete a collegiate course in his native country, went far beyond his resources, and he was necessitated to rank his early aspirations among the number of those things which God in his providence has allotted not to be. Having a good voice, with a taste for sacred music, he united the duties of teacher and precentor; and thus, in the exercises of the Sabbath, his vocation placed him in a situation bearing a relation to the sacred office for which he had thirsted, similar to that possessed by the scene of his temporal labors in its local proximity to the house of prayer.

It was the pride of his heart that, with the exception of the time included in an illness of three weeks, his place in the church had not witnessed his absence for a single day during a

Digitized by Google

period of thirty years. There he was—through hail and snow,—in storm and sunshine: his countenance beaming with an expression of honest exultation, as if a seat in the Zion of his fathers amply repaid the scholastic labors of the bygone week. Many a day, for many a year, have I seen him seated at his desk, awaiting the coming of my father with rigid punctuality. In the memory of the oldest of the congregation, his dress on that occasion was invariably the same. A slate-colored coat, with a single breast—a vest of black cloth,—velveteen breeches,—black stockings of a quality in accordance with the season,—a round hat, with a small crown and venerable brim,—and shoes ornamented with large plated buckles. A linen napkin, white as snow, lay before him, with which he ever wiped the dimness from his spectacles ere he commenced reading. I have the image of the master at this moment before my eyes, with all the fulness and freshness of reality. I hear his clear and unbroken tones, unbroken to the last, raising the sacred song,—the mild melody of his native hills—that rose wherever the persecuted found shelter. The psalmody is at an end; he places the book placidly before him. His

Digitized by Google

whole deportment speaks the reverential feelings of the man who knows what an awful thing it is to commune with his Maker. He —but imagination carries me too far. The form of the master has long since ceased to occupy a place upon earth. The hallowed scene of his harmless triumphs is profaned and desolate. Even the school-house, whose gay ivy looked like youth with old age in its arms, is now a broken ruin: 'The place that once knew him knows him no more!'

His favorite study, I might say amusement, was astronomy. By perseverance he had attained a considerable knowledge of various branches of mathematical science. Having presented an accurate survey of the Glen-O estate to the father of its present proprietor, the latter, not to be outdone in courtesy, gave him in return a pair of globes, and a small telescope. He was an unmarried man; and these, with a few choice books, were to him a wife and children. His family were very decorous, and they were rewarded with a full share of affection. On the clear cold frosty nights, when the stars were bright, and the moon beautiful, he would gaze on the blue sky till the nipping airs of midnight caused him to seek his bed,

Digitized by Google

benumbed from his nocturnal reveries. Notwithstanding the abstracted and unsocial nature of his meditations, he was a favorite everywhere. Without home or hearth, he divided his time among such of his pupils' parents as were in easy circumstances. There was no one more welcome to a seat at the farmer's ingle than the master. He was never at a loss for an entertaining story or a good-humored jest; and his presence damped no man's merriment. Even the children anticipated his visits with delight. He had 'borne his faculties so meek,'—had been 'so clear in his great office,'—that the mere cessation from his wonted kind familiarity was, to the young folks, a grievous punishment. It was a pleasant sight when, on some particular occasion of festivity, there arose an affectionate contention about what family should have him at their fireside—to see the little party, who had the good fortune to secure his promise, leading him home in triumph.

Such was Master James Fleming, whose warm look of welcome was to me, like wine to a drooping spirit, as he received from the hands of his minister, the sacred charge of an only son.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

A WINTER, attended by a train of storms of unusual gloom and number, had set in. My mother had given birth to a still-born child, and remained in a very delicate state, when an event occurred which, but for the gracious interference of an over-ruling Providence, would have plunged us all into the depths of affliction.

A continuance of frosty weather congealed the surface of the lakes and rivers. The ice was not, however, of any considerable thickness when the snows began to fall. The face of the whole country was soon changed to one wide field of stainless white,—and, to a sportive fancy, it might have appeared that Righteousness and Peace had already met on earth, and commenced their holy labors by hiding the spots and blemishes of the material world under a veil of intense purity. To me, the new aspect of external things was delightful. I skirmished with the village-boys, built Lapland huts, whose form and materials might have vied with the fabled domes of fairy-land, and, last not least, enjoyed the substantial com-

Digitized by Google

fort of our simple home with a truer relish than ever.

The fall continued at intervals for a number of days. The ground was covered in some places to the depth of six feet. I could no longer go to school, or make any distant excursions from our own door. The heights were dangerous to traverse, and it was with difficulty the roads could be kept open for the necessary purposes of country life. While the storm yet continued without any indication of change, at an early hour of the morning for so bleak a period of the year, my father was summoned to attend the sick-bed of one of his people, who, seized with sudden and violent illness, was not expected to remain alive many hours. The suffering man had expressed an anxious desire for the presence of his minister, to soothe the last moments of earthly solicitude; and his weeping son, who came as the messenger, faltered forth a hope, that nothing would prevent my father's accompanying him without delay. 'The hill-track,' he said, 'was well beaten; little snow had fallen during the night; they would not ask him to stay long; and he would surely have time to return ere the shades of evening fell.'

Digitized by Google

As the young man spoke, I saw my mother turn to the window, her eye fixed anxiously on the winter sky, like one who would read what was to be hoped, or dreaded, from the face of him he feared. The sun was visible, and nothing more. A feeble ray, barely betokening his existence, betrayed him seeking shelter beneath the dun skirt of a shapeless mass of vapor, as if conscious that he had no business where hostile elements were holding their troubled councils. The sullen clouds, as they passed and repassed each other continually, seemed marshalling themselves for more than usual mischief. In short, the whole scene presented nothing to tempt the most locomotive being to forsake the house for the highway. 'It is at least nine miles to the Black Forth, Allan,' said my mother, turning her eyes from the cheerless aspect of the world without, and fixing them expressively upon her husband. My father drew his chair close to her's as she spoke, and addressed her for some minutes in a low tone. I could not distinguish the words; but, from his manner, I am sure they were kind and persuasive. At the conclusion, she appeared to acquiesce in whatever he had stated; something touching the propriety of

Digitized by Google

the journey I suppose; for she arose to make little travelling preparations immediately afterwards with an air of resignation.

He departed, giving a positive assurance, that he would, if possible, return to dinner. It was now past nine o'clock; and, should he not be able to make good his intention, he promised, at all events, to be with us without fail at four. His horse was steady, and he had travelled the road a thousand times. The earlier part of the day passed pleasantly enough; my mother sewing at the window; Mary sitting in her little chair adjusting the drapery of her doll; and I at the table writing, as well as the darkness of the day, and my slight knowledge of the art, would permit. The snow began to fall in thick and heavy flakes about noon. I was requested to give up my employment, lest straining the nerve in the dim light should injure my eyes. I obeyed. As my attention was now unoccupied, I observed that my mother laid down her work very often, gazing on the still fall of the feathery element, and occasionally directing a longing melancholy eye-glance to the road leading to the Black Forth. Dinner time arrived. We waited long past our usual hour, but no one

Digitized by Google

came. Mary was hungry, and ate with the appetite of a healthy child. My mother helped us to everything, taking a little on her plate to please us, but evidently eating nothing. I loved her too well to be deceived. I saw that she was troubled. I stole a look at her face, and observed that her cheek was still pale, very pale, from the touch of illness. After that I could not swallow anything; my lip quivered, and my heart became full.

She again resumed her station at the window. I seated myself by her side. How heavily did the moments roll! She no longer attempted to work. The stuff fell from her unconscious hands, and lay at her feet. The clock called four. Never were sounds more welcome. In five minutes more he will be here. But five, ten, fifteen minutes, half an hour passed, and my father came not. The snow fell as if it were to fall forever,—awful and silent, like the calm that succeeds the hour of death. New heaps, of a formidable size, were fast accumulating in front of our house. I marked my mother sorrowfully watching their increase, till her eye no longer seemed to note them, as her thoughts wandered in deep abstraction. The heavy shades of the rapid

Digitized by Google

twilight were growing thicker every moment. All without wore that indistinct hue which imagination loves so well to people with fearful forms. It was to no purpose that affection continued to keep its eye intensely fixed upon the desolate waste. The embers were dying on the neglected hearth,—the snow continued to fall,—the clock again proclaimed the hour,—and yet he came not.

She closed the shutters with a feeling of bitterness. We heard footsteps approaching. The door opened, and a man muffled in a great coat stood before us. It was our ploughman, Robin. 'He came,' he said, 'to ask permission, as the night was somewhat wild, to go and meet his master. He would just take a lantern in his hand, and, with his dog by his side, he feared nothing.' The permission was gladly and gratefully granted. As the good old man closed the door behind him, my mother gave him a look that was in itself a blessing. After his departure, she appeared to experience a momentary relief. Fresh turf was heaped upon the fire; it blazed cheerly; and, drawing us close to her side, she once more resumed her work.

An hour-glass that had long lain half-for-

Digitized by Google

gotten, on a shelf in the room containing my father's books and papers, was placed upon the table. I watched the falling sands, wondering by what strange contrivance they were all caused to change their place within the appointed hour. My mother from time to time marked their progress as steadfastly as I did. It could not have been from the same curious motive; for I am very sure, that one so wise as she was must have known the secret of its formation. I gave a cry as the last remaining atoms descended to their brethren. She hasted to change the position of the glass. She seemed struck by sudden pain; for she pressed her fingers strongly to her temples. Her work was again forgotten. Her hands, that were clasped for a moment, relaxed in their grasp, and rested despondingly upon her knees. She arose from her seat, and I heard a deep sigh. Preparations were made for tea, which, from the necessary economy of our humble housekeeping, was a meal of rare occurrence. But the elements were busy abroad; and one, who was both a husband and a father, was expected home. We thought there was some noise without. We ran anxiously to the door. It was opened with difficulty. Nothing could be seen

Digitized by Google

but the snow, that almost blocked up the entrance, drifting in our faces; nothing heard but the solitary bark of the distant watch-dog complaining in the storm. I removed the white fringe that had fallen on the hair and neck of my dear parent. The damp of the night and of illness met and mingled on her cold forehead, and she looked like death. The sands of the glass again descended, and told of another hour past and gone! 'He never broke his promise,' said my mother; 'yet three hours have passed since the appointed time, and still he comes not.'

During all this period, there was no word of Robin. His protracted stay looked ominous of evil—of what complexion, our fears were left to guess. Mary became fretful, as her eyes grew heavy. My mother took her in her arms, and hummed a low mournful air, until she fell asleep. She then glided into an adjoining apartment, and placed her in bed. The door was ajar. I saw her kneel down by the bedside of her child. I heard the deep breathings of her voice, as of one in earnest prayer; and the light, gleaming fitfully on her wasted features, showed that she was weeping. I ran and placed myself beside her. I mingled

Digitized by Google

my voice with hers.—The tears that fell from her blue eyes united with mine. At that instant we heard a loud knocking. I thought my heart bounded through my bosom. The door was opened in an instant.—It is Robin —and my father!—In spite of the snow with which he was covered from head to foot, he was encircled in my mother's arms.—What happiness!

It was not until the next morning that we heard the details of his journey. The following is, as nearly as I can remember, the story as he related it at breakfast:—

'Though I rode as fast as was possible through a narrow snow-track in a mountain-road, and though we reached the Black Forth some minutes before noon, yet I arrived too late to meet the wishes of its dying master. His sufferings had terminated an hour before I came. I found a house without a head—a wife without a husband,—and children without a father. I gave the afflicted family all the consolation that duty and friendship could devise for such a trying hour. I put them in remembrance of One, who has promised to be a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless—of One, who will not forsake his peo-

Digitized by Google

ple in six or in seven troubles—of One, who, in the dark hour of adversity, sticketh closer than a brother. I could not, as a man and a Christian, depart in haste from the house of mourning, as if death or disease lay in the neighbourhood of sorrow. I remained, therefore, as long as was at all consistent with my views of returning home. It was past three before I left the residence of my departed friend. The thick snow-fall gave a double dimness to the wintry twilight. The beaten track was filling fast, leaving scarce a trace of our morning travel. The poor young man who came on the melancholy message that availed so little, proposed to guide me on my way; but I could not consent to such a thing. It would have been inhuman to have sent a young heart forth in the tempest of its feelings, to gather a deeper gloom amidst the desolation of nature.

'I moved on very slowly. The fresh masses that had fallen since morning, kept me constantly on the look-out for road-marks. Both the horse and his rider grew heartily tired of plunging through new heaps every moment. We absolutely ploughed our way down the hills. Had I been five miles on my way be-

Digitized by Google

fore daylight was altogether gone, I could have managed matters very well. The remainder of the journey, however difficult, was perfectly safe. It grew dismally dark. Above two hours elapsed in struggling with the elements. My progress during that time was little more than four miles; and, to crown all, the storm, in place of abating with the lapse of time, began to rage with increasing violence. My feelings at this moment were very painful. I cast a long look on each side, to see if there was any light to indicate the abode of man, where I might procure a guide through the dangerous track I was now traversing. Ere I had time to prosecute my inquiry, the horse's fore-feet gave way, and I was pitched to a considerable distance in the snow. The moans of the wounded animal told me that I narrowly escaped with life. He had fallen through the broken arch of a mountain-bridge, from which it was impossible to rescue him. With a full heart I blessed my God for this great deliverance. I hasted on as fast as fatigue, the darkness of the night, and the contending elements, would permit. After walking, I may say, on all-fours, for nearly three miles, I became dreadfully exhausted. Rest was abso-

Digitized by Google

lutely necessary. I placed the cape of my great coat under my head, folded my arms closely together, and lay down in the shelter of a huge pile of snow. A seductive sleep began to steal upon my senses. Soft visions sported before my eyes. In a few hours I would have been numbered among the victims of that fatal slumber, from which none was ever known to waken. The barking of a dog roused my torpid spirits. He pulled me by the coat, as if conscious of the danger of the situation I had chosen. When he saw me fairly on my feet, he galloped off; and in a few minutes Robin was by my side—thoughts of home sprung to my heart—I gained new vigor.—I again proceeded on my journey, and you know the rest. —Twice in one night did the Father of mercy turn his servant's footsteps from the dark valley and shadow of death.'

He ceased speaking. My mother's whole frame trembled with emotion. She leaned her head faintingly upon his shoulder. He kissed her wan cheek as tenderly as he had done when it shone in its first bloom, when the white and the red rose held a divided empire over it. My sister was on his knee, and I by his side. He folded us closely to his bosom.

Digitized by Google

Though he spoke not, his lips moved as in speech.—'What ails thee, father?' There was no reply. He shunned my childish glance of inquisition, inclining his head towards the window, as if to note the aspect of the morning sky. In the heavens there was one clear blue spot. It looked like an opening, through which the parted soul might wing its way to bliss. My father's eye was riveted upon it. I noted the expression of his countenance well, and I remember it perfectly. I did not then understand its meaning; but I am no stranger to it now. What heart will ask me to explain it?

CHAPTER VI.

The duty of attending school did not prove by any means irksome. The master's sway bore no resemblance to a reign of terror. The spirit of emulation was made the great spur to industry, and under its powerful influence many of us worked wonders. At the end of the first year, my arithmetical progress was pronounced respectable. My acquisitions

Digitized by Google

in writing and grammar were displayed at learned length in an autograph letter to my mother, which I delivered into her own hands. It detailed my improvement in all its bearings, and concluded with a grateful compliment to her who gave the writer his earliest lessons. For this, you may be sure, I did not go unrewarded.

About this time an incident occurred, which, at the moment, discomposed me not a little. Our community had always lived together in harmony. I did not understand what was meant by harshness or injustice. I was now taught to comprehend both.

Dick Edwards was the only boy at school with whom none of us cared to associate. Though some years older than I, he was ever among the lowest in the ranks of competition. In addition to this, he had the misfortune to be envious and ill-natured. As Dick cut but a sorry figure himself, he was extremely anxious that others should do the same. If he rose from the writing-table, he was sure to do it in such a way as to mar his neighbour's copy. He was an adept in shaking it slyly with his foot; and, to prove his innocence, was always ready to make the first com-

Digitized by Google

plaint. He would blotch your book as if by accident, and make a hundred apologies with one side of his face while he laughed at you with the other.—In short, Dick was a very cunning, troublesome boy.

It so happened, that he possessed a copy of Robinson Crusoe, adorned with wood-cuts. I had never read the book, but its fame was familiar to me. The very name was music to a boy's ears. In all the village there existed but the one copy. Like all the good things of this world, its scarcity increased its value. I longed for it night and day. I did not wish to ask a favor of Dick; but what could I do? He alone possessed the treasure, and Robinson Crusoe with wood-cuts was irresistible.

One evening, on our play-ground, I summoned up courage sufficient to ask Dick for a reading of the precious volume. He answered with a grin, that 'he did not get his books after that fashion himself.' Determined not to give up the point, I had recourse to other means. I tried if bribes could move his stubborn nature. I offered him a top, handsomely painted, and ornamented with a large brass nail in the centre, for one night's read-

Digitized by Google

ing of Crusoe. He eyed it wistfully as I displayed the beauty of its proportions. I spun it round—he could stand it no longer.—'It's a bargain,' he cried; and, snatching up my pretty plaything, ran off, as I conjectured, for the book. I remained a considerable time, but we saw no more of him that evening. The next day we met together as usual. Dick was there also, but seemingly unconscious of his engagement. I reminded him of what passed. What was my astonishment, when he utterly denied his part of the bond. I thought at first he jested, but he showed himself perfectly in earnest. He said that I indeed gave him a paltry top, but then it was only in payment of a great many marbles he good-naturedly lent me some months back. I turned to my companions.—'Friends, was I ever known to borrow any playthings?'—'Never!' was the reply from all. 'Have you seen me associate with Richard Edwards, or hold any communication with him, until yesterday?' 'Never, never,' was the answer from twenty voices. 'Did you not all witness the bargain that took place between us?'—'We did; and it's a shame to break it!' they cried unanimously. 'There,' said I, 'Dick,

Digitized by Google

you may keep the top; but you're a very wicked boy.' He turned away with a horse-laugh. His effrontery shocked me; and, unable any longer to command my feelings, I burst into tears.

My comrades were evidently much hurt at this termination of our compact. Some of them were well enough inclined to interfere, but Edwards was much older than any of them. He was also stout and daring, and manifestly disposed to stand at bay. When some of the boys offered to mediate between us, the bully buttoned up his coat, saying, that, as I was something less, he would give me odds, and fight me for satisfaction. If that did not do, he would box any one who would take my part.

At this instant, who should join the scene of altercation, but Charlie Williamson, the very boy that gave me the unfortunate gold-finch. He was a class-fellow of mine—a clever, spirited, open-hearted lad. 'Why so silent, good folks?' said he, as he observed Edwards stalking about in solitary grandeur, and the rest whispering with confused looks. The cause was soon explained. 'And is that all?' inquired Charlie. 'That is all,' answered

Digitized by Google

my companions. He walked up familiarly to my faithless foe. 'Show me the foolish thing,' said he, directing a glance to my wet cheeks, 'that has cost so much more than it is worth.' He spoke like one that would not be refused. Though not so thick set, he was something taller and more active than my oppressor. It was clear that the bully was not at all inclined to quarrel with him. He searched one pocket, then another, and at last succeeded in placing the disputed toy in Charlie's hand. 'Wat Ferguson,' asked the kind youth, 'is this your property?' I answered in the affirmative. He took me warmly by the hand.—'Will you grant a favor to an old friend?'—'If you mean yourself, I will.' 'Well, then, I shall keep your top, and you shall accept of mine. Though not so tempting an exchange, it will prove at least more substantial than your late adventure with Robinson Crusoe.' Here there was a loud laugh from all the party, which did not diminish, as my friend proceeded to whip his new toy at Edwards' very foot. The boys all thought that this was more than he would bear. His whole appearance indicated an approaching storm. He muttered and growled, and at

Digitized by Google

length kicked the top as if out of his way, while Williamson whirled it along. 'So, ho! —at your old tricks, Dickie,' cried Charlie, smiling with mischievous good humor; 'I thought for your credit, you did but jest; but now I see that my handsome plaything has crossed your pleasant temper. Come, take a friend's advice; there lies the long lane, and you can tell who lives at the end of it—so, march!—Nay, no sour looks; we are met here to be merry. Recollect the day you struck the beggar-boy. I hate quarrels; but you know I can walk without my jacket as well as anybody, if the thing must be.'

There was something conveyed in these words that his opponent did not wish to have explained. The spirit of contention slunk from amongst us, and his sidelong glance, as he passed, betrayed an expression, I fear, of a darker and deeper coloring than shame. The whole band was about to raise a shout of triumph, when Charlie interposed, saying, the churl was not worth their notice. He then proposed some general amusement, in which we all joined with double satisfaction, since the jarring temper of Edwards was no longer among us, to make us the sport of his caprice,

Digitized by Google

to control our wishes, and mar our merriment.

It was a custom of our school, that each boy in the writing and arithmetical classes should keep a quarterly book, in which a specimen of penmanship, and one or two of the more important exercises, were copied with all possible neatness every week. These books were publicly exhibited at quarter-day; and the places of honor in the classes for the next three months were severally allotted, according to the degrees of taste and ability displayed in their execution. Various privileges were the reward of him whose cleverness and industry surpassed all his competitors; and there was no boy possessed of a proper pride, that did not exert his powers to their utmost stretch, in order to attain these honest and enviable distinctions. A few days after the affair of the top, a trial of this kind was to take place, for which my class was preparing with particular diligence. Though the youngest, both in point of years and standing, I had, through great exertion, obtained the second place in the last exhibition. On the present occasion, I left nothing undone that my capacity could effect, in order to gain the great point of

Digitized by Google

preeminence above my fellows. Of all my rivals, there was none whose genius and application I feared so much, as that of my faithful friend and ally, Charlie Williamson.

On the very evening before the day of trial, he gave me a glance at his journal; for nothing jealous, or illiberal, had a place in his disposition. The moment I saw it, my heart told me that, for this time, my hopes were vain. It must have cost him a great deal of labor. It was so perfectly free from error, so prettily ornamented. The writing resembled copperplate. I expressed my admiration with sincerity and warmth. I did not conceal from Charlie that I thought it would prove a losing game to me. He smiled incredulously, imputing my anticipations to boyish diffidence. 'To-morrow will tell a different tale,' said he, and so it did.

That morrow came. I tripped to school with calmness and resignation, conscious that whether I succeeded or not, I had at all events done my utmost. I took the private path leading from our house. Just where it united with the common way, the appearance and action of a boy, who did not perceive my approach, shaded as I was, by the occasional interference

Digitized by Google

of the intervening trees, caught my attention. There were little pools of water formed in the hollows of the uneven road. In one of these he was splashing with might and main. It appeared to me a very singular amusement. He clearly dreaded detection; for, on hearing my footsteps, he ran off. Quick as he was, however, I had too much cause to remember his form not to know him instantly. It was my amiable friend, Dick Edwards. Full of curiosity, I hasted to the spot he had just quitted. I soon discovered the nature of his strange employment. A written volume, of which scarcely a single page remained legible, lay trampled in the mud. I examined it minutely. The little that escaped the malignity of the spoiler, convinced me that in the ruined manuscript I beheld the abortive labors of poor Charlie.

I entered the school with a heart as heavy as if I had been myself the sufferer. The master occupied his chair of judgment. The boys were presenting the fruit of their exertions for the quarter; and my friend was looking for his journal like one distracted. He met me on my entrance. 'Have you seen my book, Walter? I must have forgotten it at home.' I could answer nothing. I pointed

Digitized by Google

mournfully to the torn and trampled remnant that I carried in my hand. At once he perceived the extent of his misfortune. Covering his face, to conceal his emotion, he retired to a corner of the room. The boys vainly attempted to console him. The master sympathizingly inquired into the cause of the sad mischance. 'It was his custom,' he said, 'to carry his books under his arm, and in the hurry and agitation of the morning, it must have fallen unperceived.' This account was not altogether satisfactory; for a mere fall could never have reduced the hapless journal to such a deplorable state. While the affair remained in doubt, Dick Edwards, whose expressions of regret were both loud and long, had drawn a circle of hearers around him, whom he appeared to address with great earnestness. The frequent mention of my name attracted my notice. I drew nearer. I distinctly overheard him accusing me of the destruction of my friend's manuscript! This was too much. It was not my intention, from a delicacy resulting from our previous quarrel, to have exposed his treachery at this time; but his vile accusation fired my blood. I called the solemn attention of the master

Digitized by Google

and the whole school to witness my statement, and I denounced the heartless boy before them all. I pointed out the place where I found the book. Some torn leaves still lay upon the spot, and the culprit's shoe agreed in all points with the foot-marks imprinted in the mud. The master heard and saw all this with astonishment and grief. He called Edwards forward. He expatiated on the enormity of his offence,—he talked to him as a father would to an erring son,—he endeavoured to bring him to a sense of his folly;—but Dick was hardened beyond hope, and sullenly persisted in denying it all. His sentence was pronounced. His name was formally erased from the roll of the school. He was compell ed to occupy a solitary seat; and, after the duties of the day terminated, the teacher resigned his wayward charge into the hands of his parents.

The examination now went on. I produced my specimen; and it was pronounced the first among them all. The judge stated, that I had honorably won the highest place of distinction in my class. I requested his attention for a moment. I told him that I had seen Charles Williamson's journal before it was so

Digitized by Google

cruelly destroyed. My conviction at that time was, that it was much superior to mine. That conviction remained unchanged. I could not, then, honestly or conscientiously, accept an honor which accident alone had wrested from my friend. I therefore craved permission to transfer it to him who, I was very confident, had best deserved it. The master pulled out his white handkerchief, alternately wiped his spectacles and his eyes, and, descending from his chair, shook me cordially by the hand.—My kind-hearted Charlie was proclaimed head of his class, amidst the cheers of the whole school. The poor boy threw his arms around my neck, and sobbed like a child. My father joined us ere the hour of dismissal. The master drew him aside, and they conversed together in low whispers for a long time. Their eyes frequently turned upon me; and never did my father's countenance appear more luminous with undisguised delight.

Charlie came home with us to dinner. My mother produced a whole treasury of confections, and we were as merry as larks for the whole of that evening. Many years have passed upon me since. Wealth has been at my command,—I have taken a peep at all that

Digitized by Google

men call pleasure; and at this moment I can lay my hand upon my heart, and safely say, that this was one of the happiest days I ever had in my life.

CHAPTER VII.

As my education advanced, learning, unlike the many companions we pick up in this world, displayed the greater variety of charms the more our acquaintance thickened. Every care was taken to ground me thoroughly in the rudiments of whatever branch of science or art I attempted. This gave to my after acquirements the appearance of happy discoveries.—Elementary information seemed the master-key to a repository of wonders. Possessed of it, curiosity, the germ of growing intellect, walked abroad, hungering and thirsting after the novelties of knowledge; and study was with me rather the happy means of allaying a restless appetite, than a check imposed upon youthful enjoyment by the ascetic hand of scholastic discipline. The next quarterly exhibition placed me at the head of my class,

Digitized by Google

from which proud eminence I was never afterwards removed. The boys, who might have been able to keep within ken of me, were, as they advanced in years, broken in their pursuit by the interference of agricultural avocations. My situation at length resolved itself into a kind of perpetual dictatorship, without dread of rival, or hope of reward. A word of mine was law in all the erudite disputations of our literary commonwealth; and my fame and authority increased to such a degree, that it was at last doubtful whether even the master himself possessed a voice more potential in our little senate. Whispers were abroad, that Wat Ferguson need no longer seek the school-house of Glen-O to procure instruction. All this, however, excited no jealousy in our worthy teacher;—he was an honest man,—and would, in the Spartan spirit, have rejoiced had every one of his pupils proved their superiority over him.

There are some who may be disposed to mock the seriousness with which I particularize the facts and impressions of these times. Let them do so that please,—I care not. I despise the man who can think lightly of his early days. A mind of this stamp must be a

Digitized by Google

total stranger to that reflection which tells us all we know of the philosophy of life. Such a one sits in his easy chair,—looks wise'y,—speculates deeply,—speaks profoundly. With him 'childhood and youth are vanity.'—Wrapped up in self-sufficiency, he deems not that his mightiest schemes weigh less in the eternal balance, than the veriest sports of boyhood. The pranks and plans of infancy, are the airy effervescence of uncalculating single-heartedness. They are shed from the young spirit's beauty, like the sweet perfume of a flower; whereas, the tricks of your men of houses, lands, bonusses, legal pleas, and court intrigues, are nothing better than the marshy evaporations of the mere clod. The amusements of the boy are but a secondary matter, taken up for health and exercise, and relinquished at the calls of duty. They draw together a circle of social enjoyment; they cannot exist in the presence of another's pain; they deprive no one of a sound repose. Not so the sports of age; they are too serious to be thrown by lightly. Like all mere animal pastimes, their supremacy is proclaimed in the solitude of the heart,—they keep a continual vigil,—they occupy the whole soul like a feel-

Digitized by Google

ing of infinity,—and, what is worse than all, the play-ground of the mischievous wanton, with grey hairs and accumulated years, is too often selected, with an unnatural levity, on the wide field of human suffering and human sorrow.—But I forget myself: my thoughts have taken this wandering course from a deep impression of the importance of those days whose brilliancy or blackness gives a coloring to all that follows after. The clue of our destiny, wander where we will, lies at the cradle-foot. Self-love would willingly seek it anywhere else but there,—whether our manhood press the green savanna, or tread the marble hall,—there will the backward glance of the inquiring spirit be ever sure to find it.

It is to the enthusiasm with which the master dilated on the glories of astronomical science, that I may attribute the whole bent and turn of my subsequent life. On every other subject, he spoke with the habitual self-command of a teacher ; but, when his darling theme was introduced, his coolness forsook him, and the feelings of a devotee took possession of his soul. Passion appeared to work a miracle in his nature; his tones, looks, and gestures, generally cool and calm, waxed warm and

Digitized by Google

eloquent. It was then that I listened with greediness to the words of wonder that escaped his lips. I could have heard him discourse of Orion, Arcturus, and 'the sweet influences of the Pleiades,' forever.

I was, from my earliest youth, of a pale cheek and pensive temperament. At the period when we simply feel, without knowing why, or asking wherefore, there were things in nature that played upon my spirit, like the wind on the strings of the Æolian lyre, producing delicate music. I remember a place where the ground rose in gentle hillocks, covered with short fragrant heath; the fern grew there, lichens abounded, and moss like velvet carpeted the soil. Stones, of huge dimensions, were scattered over it, as if in the playful mood of some capricious giant. The wild legends of the country pointed them out as burial-marks of hidden treasure. Here I loved to resort. A small stream, like a pilgrim doing penance for past misdeeds, traced its uneasy course through a chaotic mass of jagged rocks. Opposite to the seat which I ever occupied, a bank, without verdure, rose precipitously steep; it was the margin of a wood; the oak, the ash, and the elm crowned

Digitized by Google

its top, and threw their green arms protectingly over the passing stream. Whenever anything went wrong with me, it was here—to this lone retreat—that I came for consolation. It was beyond conception pleasant, to gather the wild flowers of the full-fleshed summer, to strew them profusely on a bed of moss,—and, throwing myself at full length, feel, from top to toe, the blessed influence of the glorious sunshine. The powerful beams falling on my eyes, which were rather veiled than shut, formed a thousand fantastic images of the most dazzling lustre. The spirit within me no longer breathed a music exclusively its own; its sweet solitary notes lost their individuality, mingled and mellowed among the tender harmonies of nature; and the pulsations of an innocent heart kept time with the hum of the bees, the rustling of the leaves, the murmurs of the wood-pigeon, and the plaintive fall of the ever restless waters.

With such a disposition, it is not wonderful that the heavenly bodies should prove to me delightful sources of contemplation. The master always found in me a willing auditor, when he chose to expatiate on the mysteries of his beloved science. The figures on the celestial

Digitized by Google

globe rather confused, than assisted, my ideas of the constellations. The fables connected with the distribution of these luminous groups, were indeed calculated to amuse the fancy, but I thought them very absurd; and no lesson gave me half so much pleasure, as that which I received when gazing on the beautiful orbs themselves, sparkling like diamonds in the vault of etherial blue. When I was first told what was meant by the universe, the information I gained seemed to throw open the doors of an infinite and eternal world, and lay bare all its mighty and magnificent mechanism to the confined perception of my feeble vision. When I thought of the many engines that are at work in the limitless space, —when I considered that all the forms of light and loveliness that crowded the vast concave, were even less than unity, compared to those that remained unseen,—that most of them were the centres of invisible and innumerable spheres,—that probably, like our globe, each had its inhabitants,—my brain grew dizzy, and I experienced precisely the sensation I used to feel when, standing by the river-brink, on a clear day, I beheld the clouds reflected on the face of the waters, and shrunk

Digitized by Google

with terror from what appeared to be an immense and interminable abyss.

Children, as well as poets and lovers, may be alive to the charms of moonlight: I know, at least, that I was. I have sat at the door, like one spell-bound, watching the course of the imperial planet, as she moved in solemn silence through an unclouded sky. She looked so mild, that, when the stars were around her, I could fancy her a mother, circled by sons and daughters smiling in early beauty. I thought how happy those creatures must be, who are permitted to wander at large among these radiant spheres, exulting in the immediate presence of their Maker, and winging their way where all is still, save the soft floating of an immortal melody. It was there that the spirit of my little brother had retired for refuge and for rest, ere he had yet known that the waters of life's fountain are bitter to the taste,—ere he had become tainted with sin, or touched with sorrow. Perhaps he was even now looking on me from those bright abodes, on which my eye rested with that strange and resistless longing, which impels the heart from the scene that now is, to that which is to come. The passions of my nature, for the moment,

Digitized by Google

died within me.—I felt the pure affections that are not of this world, pervading my soul,—I turned with a calm and imploring look of melancholy to the majestic orb in whose placid beam the sense of ill had slumbered,—and I half wished that I might cease to be. A dark cloud passing over her resplendent surface reminded me, that even she is under the influence of chance and change, and accords obedience to the laws of an all-ruling destiny. I perceived the folly of my wishes, and gave up my whole heart to Him, who is without variableness or shadow of turning, who hath ordained the moon and the stars, and wrought the heavens with his fingers.

CHAPTER VIII.

I HAD now been three years under the master's care. I was acquainted with the strong features of an English education, and my father proposed withdrawing me from school, for the purpose of commencing a course of classical and historical reading, under his own immediate superintendence. When the hour of sepa-

Digitized by Google

ration arrived, my kind teacher and I parted with mutual regret. I received his blessing, and returned to my home with the proud consciousness, of not having disgraced the name with which I left it. The companionless nature of my new studies, caused me for a time to feel a little solitary; but the native quietude of my disposition soon enabled me to forget the noisy habits of the school-room. I was glad to be occupied once again under my mother's eye, for her health was still precarious, and my presence cheered her. In my sister, who was grown to be a fine little girl, I found an agreeable companion; and, while with great gravity I assisted in her lessons, I inwardly made many sage reflections on the value of a mind enlightened by information.—My immediate occupations were far from disagreeable. The great names and daring deeds, recorded in ancient history, were sources of amazement and delight; and, when a slight acquaintance with the Latin tongue enabled me to express a few common ideas in the phrases of that language, I exulted, as if in the possession of some mystic secret which raised me far above the level of my kind. My old toys and playmates began to lose their interest.

Digitized by Google

I no longer frequented the scene of our boyish amusements. I retired within myself; and distributed my time between my books, my secluded haunts, and a small plot of ground that, in imitation of Fabricius, I cultivated as a garden.

One evening, as I meditated on the events of years long gone, my attention was attracted by a singular appearance of bustle and rejoicing in the village. I was completely ignorant of the cause, for of late I had not been much abroad. There were lights in the windows, guns firing in all directions; and a great pile of green wood placed in the central street, emitted alternate bursts of smoke and flame. I eagerly inquired the meaning of a sight which I never witnessed before. I was informed that the tenants of the Glen-O estate were, in this way, expressing their joy at the return of their landlord, Sir John Fitz-Maurice, after an absence of five years. I envied the man whose presence alone could make so many people happy—and I would not have believed that, on one side at least, there did not exist a sincere affection. As the name of Fitz-Maurice is closely connected with the history of my

Digitized by Google

early days, I feel myself called upon to say something about it.

It was the boast of this ancient house, that they could trace their descent, clearly and unequivocally, to an English captain, who held command in an association of warlike adventurers, that landed at Waterford at the time the worthless son of Henry II. received the title of Lord of Ireland. The achievements of this great ancestor, which, to my simple imagination, appeared little better than the proceedings of a plunderer and cut-throat, gained him an inheritance in the country that was forced to adopt him; and were preserved by his descendants as sacred remembrances by which they were privileged to look up to the possession of power, and the assumption of consequence, as matters of undoubted right. A slip off the southern stem, transplanted to the north, took root, and produced the present family. Hugh Fitz-Maurice, the father of Sir John, was an extensive farmer, whose ruling passion was a devoted attachment to money. He was a member for the county of A—— in the Irish parliament. Always contented with the powers that be, he never troubled his head about state-affairs. His attendance on the

Digitized by Google

house was not by any means distinguished by regularity; and when there, his vote was purely passive, except some question touching the agricultural interests chanced to be discussed. A good-natured acquiescence in certain ministerial measures, that bore a little hard upon the welfare of his country, procured him a mark of royal esteem in the shape of a baronet's patent. The addition of title did not, however, disturb his plans of economy. He continued faithful to his beloved parsimony to the last. His men were employed, in very severe weather, draining a marsh, by which he hoped to add an acre to his estate. Accustomed to cheer his working people by his presence, with which they would at all times have most willingly dispensed, he remained with them, on a rainy day, rather longer than was prudent, and unfortunately caught a cold that, in the end, carried poor Sir Hugh to his grave, — where, strange to tell, he occupied but a few feet of the large tract of ground that, for upwards of forty years, kept exclusive possession of his time and attention.

His son succeeded to his riches and public honors, with a determination, to which there are but too many parallels, of being as unlike

Digitized by Google

his father as possible in all things. He threw the care of his property into the hands of an agent, thought of nothing but making a figure in the state, became a courtier, and resolved, at every hazard, to be no cipher in the great political account. To strengthen his interest, and increase his wealth, he married a lady closely allied to the noble house of Thomond. By her he had one son and three daughters, of whom the boy, the eldest-born, was, at the time to which I allude, about fourteen years of age. Sir John's health being somewhat impaired by constant attendance on the house, he determined on a little relaxation from the cares of public life. His lady recommended the soft clime of Italy as the best restorative after fatigues, bodily and mental; but matters of a prudential cast led him to prefer a visit to his patrimonial territories at Glen-O. He was too old a politician not to know, that proxies are not always faithful to their trust. There would be no harm, he thought, in taking a sly peep at the way in which matters were managed by his deputy; besides, the situation of Fort-Maurice was highly salubrious, in the summer season its appearance was even romantic; and, from the length of time that

Digitized by Google

elapsed since their last visit, it would appear to them with all the freshness of novelty. Such were the leading considerations which were said to influence the baronet in leaving Dublin. He bade a temporary farewell to his friend at the castle, packed his family into the great travelling carriage, and journeyed, in search of health, to the shores of the north. The village welcome that excited my curiosity, was given on the very day that Sir John Fitz-Maurice re-entered the halls of his ancestors.

The presence of a landlord, after a long absence, causes a full flow of speculative conversation among his rustic tenantry. Their sovereign is then among them, and a thousand surmises are afloat about the reason of his coming, the time of his intended stay, and the changes that may occur in the administration of his affairs, from the agent down to the gate keeper. A great deal of this chit-chat was going on after the return of our landlord. I heard innumerable stories, magnifying his personal and parliamentary consequefice; and, though my ideas of our national representative assemblies were extremely vague and indefinite, yet the cloudy costume in which the imagination clothed his character as a public

Digitized by Google

personage, served rather to inflame than allay the curiosity with which I thirsted for a sight of the great man. The very sound of his name carried a certain dignity along with it; his rank was most imposing, and I was morally sure, that one who sat in council with the rulers of the land, must possess a mind and form fashioned after no ordinary style of architecture. Fancy continued working at the picture so long, that at length I had a Sir John Fitz-Maurice of my own, finished even to the last faint tints—the prince of land-proprietors, the Cicero of public speakers, and the *beau ideal* of Baronets.

I was at my desk revelling over an English translation of Plutarch's Lives, considerably abridged for my use my father sitting at a little distance, quite at home in a copy of Calvin's Institutes; when a knocking, the loudest we ever heard at our plain portal, reached our ears. Our contemplations were for the moment broken by this unusual peal; and, as the domestics were neither remarkable for numbers nor alertness, my father walked to the door himself, at a pace rather at variance with his usual dignified composure. He returned, showing in a stranger, whose manner

Digitized by Google

and appearance were unlike any thing I had ever seen before. The dress he wore, to my inexperienced observation, seemed at once ridiculous and splendid. An excess of art and affectation was apparent in all its compartments, though the materials were evidently rich and rare. He was of a low stature, in person rather pursy, with features strongly marked by the small-pox. His eyebrows resembled what one might be supposed to daub in haste with a piece of burnt cork, from beneath which peered a pair of black eyes, extremely small and extremely vivid. The muscles of his brow must have possessed astonishing flexibility; for, when reconnoitering the surrounding objects, he contrived, without closing it, to veil one of his eyes in such a way, as to concentrate all its lustre into a bright burning point, the other remaining all the time perfectly unobscured. The various departments of his countenance presented a whole, that required no common strength of nerve to look upon without shrinking. Yet, since the truth must be told, this man, with his unpleasant physiognomy, was no other than the original of my divine portrait—Sir John Fitz-Maurice

Digitized by Google

A conversation ensued. I had a strong hope that eloquence and intellectual energy would at least display the senator, since a pleasing person failed to mark the man. Though I appeared completely absorbed in the pages of Plutarch, I was secretly noting every word that passed the lips of the important personage, from his entrance to his exit.

'So, Mr Ferguson, I see you're an improving man.—This little box is a clear gainer by its change of masters.'

'My predecessor, Sir John, had a large family to maintain; and the will and the power are two very different things. I have but two children, and I wish, naturally enough, to make them as comfortable as I can. Besides, I think I ought to use my best endeavours in improving the grounds, that the proprietor may have no cause to repent of his benefaction.'

'So—so—so—right—very right.—But, *apropos;* speaking of children, that reminds me of the object of my visit.—My son's tutor did not exactly like to quit the pure air of Dublin, and his place is at present unoccupied. I am told that you are competent to fill it. If you choose to do so while we vegetate here, all I can say is, that you shall have a good dinner

Digitized by Google

every day, and be as well paid as he was.—What think you, Ferguson?'

The baronet dropped his flexible eyebrow, an air of lordly condescension mingling with the sinister cast of his features as he repeated his question; thinking, from my father's silence, that he was struck dumb by the announcement of the unexpected honor.

—'Well, what says your reverence to our proposal?—hang it, don't fall asleep, man.'—

—'Your proposal, Sir John, would, on many accounts, be very acceptable to me—but,'—

—'But what?' said the baronet, elevating his eyebrow—

—'But that the education of my own son renders it impossible for me to attend the young gentleman at Fort-Maurice.'

As he spoke these words in a calm and steady tone, the member for A——— again dropt his eyebrow, but more rapidly than before, and fixed his glance upon my father, as if he was dubious whether the person he scrutinized was, or was not, in the healthful exercise of his senses. The inquiry did not elicit anything calculated to strengthen his doubts on that subject.——'And so, Mr Ferguson, my

Digitized by Google

proposition is negatived *nem. con.*—Your time, it seems, is far too precious, to be thrown away on one who can, however, bestow a house and farm upon occasion—eh?'

'I am neither insensible of the honorable nature of the confidence you would repose in me, nor ungrateful for the free gift I enjoy, as the pastor of your people, Sir John;—but I repeat, that I cannot, consistently with my duty as a parent, relinquish for any offer, however tempting, the instruction of my child. It is a task which I am called upon to perform by the voice of nature and the laws of God.'

Here the worthy baronet thought proper to whistle a tune, at the conclusion of which he resumed the conversation.

'This, I presume,' directing his hawk's eye to me, 'is the learned youth—the well-beloved son, to whom you are pleased to allude in your various responses?'

My father bowed.

'Pray, may I take the liberty of asking what may constitute the subject of your meditations, or, in plainer prose, what you are reading, young gentleman?'——

'Plutarch's Lives, in English, Sir,' I answered, blushing up to the eyes.

Digitized by Google

'*Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes, emollet mores, nec sinit esse feros*,' observed Sir John, noting my confusion, and regaining his good humor as he proceeded in his quotation.—Well then, Mr Ferguson, since the mountain cannot go to Mahomet, there is no alternative but that Mahomet should go to the mountain. What think you of associating my tyro with this *felix puer* of your's as *socii et condiscipuli*, under your paternal roof, until we may chance to light upon some one so poor in his pretensions, as to think a seat at our table of Fort-Maurice nothing derogatory to himself, or his duties?'

'If you do not jest, Sir, I shall be most happy to receive your son at any period you may please to appoint; and I shall so far assimilate the studies of my pupils, that the one shall possess an equal share of my time and attention with the other.'

'In the name of Apollo, and the chaste muses, be it so,'—said our visiter; who, asking my father if he was a judge of horse-flesh, proceeded to the door, where, having lectured for a few minutes on the points of his hunter, he backed him and rode off, as if the fate of empires depended on his speed.

Digitized by Google

'Ah, father!' I exclaimed, 'never would I have supposed that gentleman to be Sir John Fitz-Maurice, the great member of parliament.'—An evasive answer showed no disposition, on his part, to enter on the merits of the case. I resolved the subject in silence; I placed my picture in all the varieties of light and shade; still, it bore no trait of resemblance to the original. I was quite bewildered. At last, I arrived at this conclusion, that there was more in the composition of a modern great man, than my philosophy could possibly find out.

CHAPTER IX.

Disappointed in the idea I formed of the father, I had no very sanguine expectations of meeting a companion to my taste in the person of the son. He came early the next day, on a handsome bay pony fancifully ornamented, and attended by a servant in livery. He dismissed the man at the door, desiring him to call at four o'clock, which, as Fort-Maurice was but three miles distant, was an arrange-

Digitized by Google

ment of little difficulty. He saluted my father with an easy and unembarrassed air, and took my hand with such an appearance of warm-heartedness, that I felt at once on the familiar footing of an old accquaintance. Here again had my foolish fancy played me a jade's trick. If the baronet failed to equal my lofty anticipations of his person and character, the youth on whom I now looked seemed as greatly to exceed the slovenly sketch which my capricious imagination had drawn of him.

Though very far from a standard of moral perfection, yet I have never seen a being so formed for fascination as Gerald Fitz-Maurice. He was made to win all hearts. He had at this time passed his fourteenth year, and was of a height rather rare at his age. He inherited the black sparkling eyes of his father, but they were large, and laughing with good humor. His brow was a pencilled line of jet without the perverse trick of flexibility. His lips resembled a parted cherry. The color on his cheeks was so pure and pellucid, that you could have almost fancied the cunning hand of Nature had inserted rose-leaves under his transparent skin. The glossy curls of his raven hair clustered on his neck; and

Digitized by Google

he might even have been pronounced girlish and effeminate, had not his healthful form and exuberant animal spirits, keeping him constantly in quest of exercise, added a warm tinge of brown to the natural hues of his eloquent countenance.

It was the misfortune of Gerald that he was —like me—an only son. His mother absolutely doted on him. She was a feeble-minded woman, with the prevailing follies of high life. She treated him more as a pretty plaything, than as a rational being in the first blow of intellect. It was her pride to see the beautiful creature bounding before her, dressed in a half-military costume, with his blue cap and buttons of flowered silver. Learning was ministered to him in gentle doses, lest he should injure his constitution, or destroy his good looks. His father deemed him as yet too young to require his personal superintendence; and Gerald was left to be the arbiter of his own destiny, without the help of admonition, or the guidance of control. Flattered by his inferiors, and idolised by his parents, his luxuriant spirit wasted its strength in the production of weeds and wild flowers, of which the glare and glitter of the one availed

Digitized by Google

their possessor little more than the rank and profitless fertility of the other.

Few, or none, of these defects in character and education were visible to me, when I became acquainted with this captivating boy. He looked like one that was all heart; the very contradictions in our moral and physical temperament endeared us the more to each other. There was nothing monotonous in our intercourse; our habits, manners, and ideas, were as opposite as if we were natives of a different clime. Perhaps it was this very opposition that produced the harmony of our connexion, as the tones of different instruments form a concert in music. I possessed a simple seriousness that amused him greatly; he appeared to me the gay and generous hero of a romantic tale. I was shrinkingly sensitive, and nervously fearful of giving offence; he was bold and reckless, with a confidence in his powers of pleasing, that kept him sinning and repenting from morning to night. After leaving school, I gradually dropt all communication with my old companions. These were times when I longed for some one of a kindred age and feeling, to whom I might impart the little history of my day dreams. In Gerald

Digitized by Google

Fitz-Maurice I found a friend, of a cast far superior to anything I had experienced or anticipated. I did not hesitate to make him the repository of a confidence that knew no reservation. Above me in years, birth, fortune, and the graces of person, the kindness with which he uniformly treated me, at once flattered my foolish pride, and completely won my heart.

Even my father, little disposed as he was to compromise his authority, was not proof against his witchery. He discerned in Gerald the seeds of a powerful understanding, and he was anxiously solicitous to clear away the follies that obscured their growth,—a task of no common magnitude. I was almost three years younger,—yet, my education, if not so general, was much more substantial than his. To remedy the defects occasioned by indolence and inattention, my father endeavoured to place my acquisitions in such a light as might produce a spirit of emulation in my thoughtless comrade. There were moments when his plan gave every hope of success,—when the spoiled favorite of fortune, ashamed of his deficiencies, called forth his energies, and displayed powers of great promise;—but

Digitized by Google

his return to Fort-Maurice always cooled his passion for learning; and the resolution formed in the morning seldom survived to the ensuing day. Yet it was impossible to be angry with him, or even appear to be so: he possessed a versatility of temper that enabled him to make himself agreeable to every person on every occasion. When simply disposed to please, he was very charming,—but, when conscious of error, he wished to propitiate your resentment and regain your favor, he was altogether irresistible.

But there was a circumstance in the character of Gerald that grieved us all: his religious education had been shamefully neglected. The bright points he displayed were palpably more the fitful emanations of a fine natural disposition than the steady results of a fixed moral principle. This was a delicate affair with my father. The baronet was a member of the church of England, and a mere man of the world; he well knew that any advances on his part, to promote the spiritual instruction of his son, would be attributed to sinister motives; his real object would neither meet success nor receive a fair construction. In the volatile spirit of the boy himself, there lay

Digitized by Google

difficulties sufficiently appalling. The pastor of Glen-O was not one of those that 'compass earth and sea to make a proselyte,' but he was afflicted to see so little fruit proceed from a tree so young, so fair, and so flourishing. In his affection for me there was something like a hope. I was encouraged to direct the thoughts of my fellow-student to those sacred subjects with which I lived in sweet companionship from my infancy. Delighted with the importance of the office assigned me, I commenced my labors with the zeal of a young missionary. My expectations were of a cast much more exalted than my father's: they lay nothing short of complete reformation. How did all this terminate?—Time will tell.

In a short time Gerald was like one domesticated in our family. On the very first day, when the servant returned for him, he desired him, with a smile, to present the compliments of a dutiful son to Lady Fitz-Maurice, and say, that he was so well pleased with his new teacher, he would continue to take lessons for the remainder of the evening. The man, who was no stranger to his young master's influence at home, did as he was desired. He remained accordingly, and his sprightly sallies

Digitized by Google

and sportive tricks, caused Mary and I to regret the hour when our handsome and high-born visiter was compelled to return home. His mother even condescended to call upon us once, as I afterwards learned, at the earnest request of the affectionate youth, who was anxious to do all possible honor to his village friends. The shock of illness was still visible on my poor parent. She received many marks of attention from the house of Fort-Maurice; which certainly could not be attributed to the unbidden kindness of its cold and haughty mistress, whose looks, not to be immediately disagreeable, were the most repulsive of any I had ever seen. Conscious that Gerald was at the bottom of all, though with a delicacy you would not have imagined to exist in such a careless creature, he affected ignorance of the whole matter; it was not in the nature of things that we should know and not love him.

It was a custom of my father's, to preach a few sermons every year for the particular benefit of young people. They were remarkable for their plainness and simplicity. He never indeed wandered far in the misty tracts of controversial theology; but on these occasions, he studied to be more than usually clear.

Digitized by Google

His doctrines were then as transparent as his heart. A discourse of this description was announced for a certain Sabbath. I instantly resolved on inviting my young friend to participate in the instructions of that day. A fair opportunity was thus presented of making an auspicious commencement to the great work on which I had determined. I made my request accordingly. He did not meet my wishes on this subject with the alacrity he often manifested in matters of much less moment. Seeing, however, that I was greatly interested in his going, rather than give me pain, he consented. The sermon was preached in the presence of Gerald. My father never appeared to me half so eloquent. His arguments were so convincing, his promises so persuasive, that I could not help looking triumphantly at my comrade, whenever a remark was made that appeared at all applicable to his situation. To my astonishment and delight, Gerald's attention seemed profoundly occupied. He drew forth his tablets, writing at intervals, as if determined not to trust precepts so valuable to the faithlessness of memory. I felt a kind of unholy longing for the conclusion of the solemnities. I was

Digitized by Google

most anxious to witness the sweet sensations of my friend. The blessing was pronounced, and the assembly separated. Gerald and I were among the first that quitted the house. Both were desirous of a private interview. We walked into the burial-ground, and sat down upon a tombstone. I proceeded to feel the pulse of my beloved neophyte. I was so full of the thing, that I talked myself out of breath, not waiting for his answers, in my wish to anticipate, what I was sure his feelings must have been. I zealously recapitulated the precise points, that were best calculated to give the unilluminated mind a sense of its situation. I continued, nothing discouraged by the obvious inclination to yawn, which, to a less interested inquisitor, would have appeared very manifest, in the countenance of my auditor. At last, after exhausting myself and my subject, I requested Gerald to favor me with a sight of his notes.

'What notes?' said he.

'The notes I saw you take upon your tablets,—the notes of the discourse.'

He burst into a loud laugh. 'Had you not talked so fast, I would have shown them to you long ago.—Here they are.'

Digitized by Google

I took them hastily; but what a disappointment!—in place of making selections from the sermon, the wayward genius of Gerald caricatured the whole scene, with the exception of my father. He struck off a resemblance of the venerable master in his Sabbath-day vocation and antique garb, so ludicrous, and yet so like, that, had not my high-wrought expectations received too severe a crush, I fear I could not have resisted an inclination to smile. As it was, I felt little disposed to mirth. My first attempt had entirely failed. I was personally mortified. I could scarcely bring myself to answer any question put to me during the remainder of that day.

At this hour I am better calculated to analyze my feelings than I was at that time; and, on summoning up the shadowy semblance of sentiments and circumstances, buried beneath the weight of passing years, I am ashamed to say, that, in the hopes and regrets experienced during this early effort of piety and friendship, I have discovered no small leaven, of what truth can call by no other name, than *vanity*.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

THE wound, inflicted by the apathy of Gerald, was not long in healing. He was a perfect master of numberless pleasant inventions for killing time; and, in spite of my resolutions to reclaim him, it appeared in the end much more likely that he should convert me. He grew upon my affections every moment. I found, in our social circle, nothing that could atone for the absence of this playful boy. When he left us for the day, I grew fretful and capricious, and drooped over my lessons in sullenness and silence. My homely apparel, though always clean and comfortable, when I walked beside him, looked beggarly and mean. I paid infinite attention to my rustic toilet. It was but too evident that the splendid appearance of my handsome associate excited comparisons hurtful to my pride and dangerous to my peace.

During two days we neither saw, nor heard from him. I became actually ill-humored. I confess, with shame and regret, that, for once in my life, obedience to my parents was not the labor of love. As I sat musing at the

Digitized by Google

window on the morning of the third day, I observed, with a fluttering heart, a servant in the livery of Fitz-Maurice approaching the house. He came leading the handsome pony of his young master, ready saddled and bridled. A strange hope sprung up within me. Perhaps I was invited to join my gay companion at his lordly home. My surmise was just. There was a note, from Lady Fitz-Maurice to my father, written in the most elaborate terms of condescending courtesy. It requested him to permit me to make a visit of a month at her house. She stated, that her poor son was tortured with a cold that greatly depressed his spirits, and longed ardently for the society of his little favorite. Ill as he was, Gerald made an effort to scribble half a dozen lines to me :—

'DEAR WATTY,

'Come over here; forget *hic, hæc, hoc,* for 'a week or two. I have vowed by Styx to 'daub no more caricatures.—From this day 'forward I am determined to be as grave as 'a mustard-pot. I send Rosette dressed in 'her Sunday-clothes: do n't fail to try her 'mettle on the way. Tell Mary that I shall

Digitized by Google

'send her a chest of drawers to hold her baby-
'rags—and gallop as fast as you can to your
'own expecting

GERALD.'

I never dreaded my father's look of thought so much, as at the moment he stood deliberating, respecting the answer he should give to this double invitation. I am of opinion, that it would have been unfavorable to my wishes, had not my dear mother, who perceived the agitation I experienced, produced a decision in my favor. Palpitating with joy, I tricked myself out in all the finery of my little wardrobe; bade a hasty, and, as I now think, an unfeeling adieu, to my parents and sister—and trotted off as if the world were my own, followed at a respectful distance by my party-colored attendant.

I met my youthful host at the gate leading to his father's proud abode. He was posted there, anxiously awaiting my arrival. The servant took charge of Rosette, and we went in search of amusement until the hour of dinner. I never at any time saw my friend look so extremely handsome. His spirits, far from suffering any depression, were, if possible,

Digitized by Google

more airy and frolicsome than ever. Nothing gave him greater delight than my exclamations of astonishment, while surveying the various objects, with which the inventive spirit of wealth, always thirsting after novelty, had ornamented the surrounding scene. Nature and art combined to make it a wilderness of wonders. I could have wandered through it forever, my eyes roving, from place to place, and from beauty to beauty, like one, who, seeking for entertainment in a vast library, travels over the immense surface of books, distracted by their numbers, and uncertain which to choose.

The shrill peal of a bell warned us to retrace our steps. When we entered the great hall, I was absolutely frightened by the grandeur of its appearance. The powdered servants hurrying to and fro, made me quite nervous. As I followed Gerald into the gorgeous apartment where dinner was served up, I thought I should have fainted. A large company, of what are called persons of distinction, were assembled to grace the festive board. Struck, I suppose, by the plainness of my garb, they stared at me as if I had been an emigrant from Otaheite. The first objects I discerned

Digitized by Google

distinctly among the mass, were the flexible brow of Sir John Fitz-Maurice, and the sarcastic glare of his small black eye, as he viewed me from head to foot. He took my hand with a grave and ceremonious air, and introduced me to his guests, as the Solon of Glen-O. I did not know whether to laugh or cry at this singular presentation. A dapper gentleman, with very white teeth, proposed the name of Lycurgus as still more appropriate, my costume being, he observed, classily Laconian. This sally of wit created a general grin, which encouraged the diminutive personage to proceed.

'Pray, Sir John, is not this the pious youth, who, out of a holy love for thy heady and high-minded son, endeavoured to make him a demure Methodist parson?'

'Yea, and verily it is,' answered the baronet.

'I 'll be hanged though if that cock would fight,' said a bluff old fellow, dressed in a green hunting-frock and red waistcoat.—'He has too much of the blood of the O'Brian's in him to listen to such rigmaroles.'

'For shame, Major Macarthy,' cried Lady Fitz-Maurice; 'make not our humble name a reproach to the godly.'

Digitized by Google

152580

'What is all this about?' asked a cadaverous-looking matron, whose hearing was something blunted by age.

'O, nothing, madam,' replied the stately hostess, with a complacent smile: 'nothing but a new fancy of our young hopeful that we have upon the *tapis*.'

The call to dinner, to my great relief, ended the sublime conversation.

The table was loaded with all the luxuries of the season. Of the greater part, I could neither tell the names, nor discern the uses. The wines of France, Portugal, and Madeira, sparkled in vessels of crystal, to stimulate the jaded humors of the drowsy sensualist; and the burning spices of the Indies were there, to provoke a fresh action in the sated appetite. From the haughty baronet and his illustrious guests I received a new lesson. I was taught to consider eating and drinking as a serious part of the business of life. I once witnessed a discussion respecting church government, at a meeting of my father's presbytery, and I then remarked the impressive solemnity with which the debate was conducted. In this patrician assembly, I heard the laws of cookery, and the merits of the important personage

Digitized by Google

that ruled the kitchen, canvassed with equal seriousness, and greater ardor. Hungry though I was, I almost dreaded eating, lest my rustic habits should expose me to the ridicule of these distinguished beings. They were, however, too deeply occupied, to waste a thought on such a thing as I was. Gerald would hear no excuses, and forced me to taste of everything that could gratify my uninitiated palate. At length, we arose from table. I recollected that it was the first time I ever did so without hearing the blessing of the Creator invoked upon the banquet, and the thanks of the creature returned for the mercies received.

Heavy showers of rain confined us to the house. The ladies retired, leaving the gentlemen a glorious opportunity of getting rid of the intolerable burden of rationality, with which Nature, in her wantonness, had thought fit to load them. Gerald was a favorite with these choice spirits, and remained amongst them. I, of course, followed his example. There were things said and done on that occasion, which I could not then comprehend; but they were of a description that I would not now name, nor, if possible, remember. A hoary debau-

Digitized by Google

chee wished to ply me with wine, that he might have the joke of fuddling the young parson.—Unaccustomed to the use of stimulating liquors, my simple habits rebelled. After the second glass I could take no more. Even this elevated me beyond the natural pitch. I laughed, capered, talked loud, made myself quite at home, and was guilty of a hundred fooleries. The night soon grew old upon our pleasures. We were escorted to bed in great form. Gerald and I slept in the same apartment. We chatted over the events of the evening, and the bonds of intimacy were cemented to such a degree, that, in the enthusiasm of friendship, I closed my eyes to slumber, without once recollecting that I had a God and a guardian that claimed my adoration.

The rosy light of the returning morn found me ill at ease, amidst a host of gloomy meditations. The reckless humor of my light-minded companion, who rallied me on my sanctified looks, caused me to assume an appearance of cheerfulness. This gradually gave place to real merriment, as the sense of misconduct deadened, or died away, in the crowd of boyish dissipations with which the heir of Fort-Maurice contrived to lighten the lapse of

Digitized by Google

time. We strolled through gardens, where the fruits and flowers of a southern clime, half naturalized by the fostering hand of wealth, flourished and shot into bloom, as if in despite of Nature. We inhaled the cool breath of grottoes, where the fingers of a fairy seemed to have fashioned her abodes, glistening with coral, spar, rock-crystal, and the curious shells of the far seas. We reposed in hermitages, by which the most voluptuous might not disdain to linger. The moss borrowed a rich perfume from the jasmine, the honey-suckle, and the sweet brier. The voice of the distant waterfall, winding along the echoes of the hill, stole on the ear like the thrill of distant music. It was a paradise of sweet sensations. When Gerald laughingly asked me, if home was ever like this? I could not help replying, Never!

There was a lake at a little distance from the family mansion; it lay embosomed in a dark grove. An island rose exactly in its centre, ornamented with a miniature representation of a Grecian temple, and planted with the weeping-willow. The wild duck sheltered in its sedgy sides; the large leaf of the water-lily spread its green expanse on a

Digitized by Google

level with its margin. Here my friend had a shallop, in which he took great delight: it was a thing of the most delicate construction, tastefully painted, furnished with silken streamers, and a light sail, white as the driven snow. When its owner, dressed in his garb of summer, and buoyant with the elasticity of young blood, propelled his tiny vessel over the lake's clear bosom,—in his gay mood, pursuing the solitary swan, that looked as if indignant at this intrusion on its loneliness,—one could not help giving way to the wild fancy, that the genius of the woodlands and the waters was abroad taking his pastime, on territories decidedly his own. Gerald taught my unpractised hand to manage the sail and use the oar; and many a jest he enjoyed at the awkwardness of my first attempts as a mariner. When there was music on the island, we left the boat to the freedom of its own will, and reclining, one at the stem and the other at the stern, abandoned ourselves to the full enjoyment of the tranquil indolence that creeps upon the sense, while reposing in the softness of sunset, and the sweetness of song.

During one of our aquatic excursions, I

Digitized by Google

accidentally discovered to my companion, that, though residing for years within a few miles of its verge, I had never yet seen the sea. He immediately decided on a journey thither. It lay at a distance from Fort-Maurice, and the road leading to it was in good repair. The day on which we set out wore a threatening aspect. Lady Fitz-Maurice insisted on sending the carriage with her beloved son. Gerald amused himself on the way, in repeating various anecdotes illustrative of his mother's foolish fondness, as he called it, and in mimicking her tone and manner, in which, though a shameful subject for a son's merriment, I must confess he succeeded to admiration. When we reached the beach, we alighted from the carriage, and, ascending a neighboring eminence, I proceeded to gratify my curiosity by an unrestricted view of ocean.

It did not altogether accord with the idea I formed of its tremendous magnificence; yet I could not but acknowledge that it was wonderful—most wonderful. Its appearance on that day was not tempestuous, but troubled. The blue waves rose and fell, like the heavings of an unquiet bosom. They fretted them-

Digitized by Google

selves to foam, as a fiery horse when driven against his will. I marked the stern career of the rushing waters ; I reflected, that for ages they had been travelling on their way, and that for ages they would continue to do so. Man might grow grey in watching the ebb and flow of the multitudinous ocean, yet he would observe no abatement of its speed,—no prostration of its vigor. It is a leviathan,—'a king over all the children of pride.' Yet there was something saddening, in its sullen and ceaseless motion. The vast company of curled and crested billows seemed hurrying on to the accomplishment of some mysterious and melancholy destiny. Many a goodly form had they swept along in their reckless course. Like man himself, many a mourning cry did they hear, unheeding in the hour of their stormy and desolating triumphs. A coasting vessel appeared in the distance : I pitied the hard fate of the poor wave-worn boy, compelled to seek sleep and shelter in the arms of so false a friend. Sea-birds of exquisite symmetry and dazzling whiteness, wheeling through the air, and venting their shrill plaints around, conveyed to my excited imagination the idea of the spirits of shipwrecked mari-

Digitized by Google

ners, lamenting for their comrades on the deep. Sadly and silently I turned away from the mighty element, whose majestic form reflected so many images of sorrow.

The voice of Gerald awoke me from my ocean dream; he pointed to a romantic isle that lay about three miles off the coast; he said he would like, of all things, to pay it a visit in his boat on a fine day. It wore an appearance so picturesque and peculiar, that I warmly joined in his wishes.

'Are you satisfied with your present visit?

'Yes,' I answered.

'Well, then, let us back to mamma; and rely on't, it will go hard with me if I do not contrive to give you a merry trip to that self-same island, at no very distant day.'

CHAPTER XI.

The month expired, and, in company with young Fitz-Maurice, I returned home. Until the period of this visit, I never slept abroad for a single night. There was then nothing wonderful in the singularity of my sensations,

Digitized by Google

on re-entering the paternal mansion. Like Gulliver, after his voyage to Brobdignag, I conceived that everything, during my absence, had degenerated in size. The garden was a mere patch.—the trees were all dwarfish,—and our cottage, that, a short time ago, I reckoned the pride of the village, seemed scarcely fit for the habitation of a peasant. These were not all the changes that the interval of a few weeks effected. I witnessed a transformation in my feelings, still more disagreeable to dwell upon. I rode up to the door as if it were the entrance to a prison: I was a criminal, and self-condemned; the courage of my innocent days deserted me. Instead of tripping, as I used to do, proud of having done my duty, I felt degraded with the consciousness of abusing my time—of treating my natural protectors, if not with ingratitude, at least with indifference,—and of turning my back on the faith of my fathers, and the precepts in which I had been educated. Had it not been for my companion, I know not what I should have done: his presence protected me, even from myself, and I was actually happy to have him with me, that the whole attention of our family might not be directed towards me.

Digitized by Google

My terrors were apparently without foundation. Mary kissed me over and over,—my mother welcomed us with her accustomed kindness,—and the countenance of my father was as still and as placid as I had seen it ever. I left Gerald to answer all questions, and commenced searching for my papers, as if I were determined to atone for past neglect, by instant and extraordinary diligence. In my haste and perturbation, I began to read at the wrong end of the book; and when the mistake was pointed out, I was covered with confusion. With all Gerald's unbounded pleasantry, the day proved but a sombre one;—there was something wrong in the machinery of our social circle;—the jest flagged in its course, and the spirit of heaviness spread his drooping pinion over us all. It was not without considerable solicitation that I prevailed on my friend to stay for dinner; he grew weary and spirit-worn, and, after a meal, which appeared more than ordinarily frugal, he rose up and departed.

When he was gone, I lifted a book, and retired to my bed-room, neither to read nor sleep. My thoughts dwelt repiningly on the pleasures of Fort-Maurice; it was there alone

Digitized by Google

that I tasted the sweets of existence; there the hours glided by on wings of gossamer; and even the rude face of Nature dimpled itself to smiles, to wile the foot of man to linger in its solitudes. 'Happy, happy Gerald!' I exclaimed, 'who, beautiful thyself, art born to rule over scenes of kindred beauty!'

I threw myself back upon the bed, and closed my eyes, determined to forget the present, and riot in the memory of the past. I indulged in the pleasures of imagination, until images and ideas, dark and discordant, dancing before my mental vision, foretold the approaching slumber. I was roused by a light knocking at my chamber-door. It was opened by my mother. She pressed my forehead with her soft hand, and inquired tenderly after my health. I told her I was quite well. She said she had made some tea on my account, as she supposed I was accustomed to it at Fort-Maurice. Her tones were faint and low, and full of affection.—My heart smote me.

My father was abroad on a call of duty. I took a seat at the tea-table, with greater courage than I was able to muster during the

Digitized by Google

day. There was nothing said, or done, calculated to revive unpleasant recollections. I began once more to feel myself at home. Our conversation assumed an interesting turn. The mild and endearing manners of the gentlest of women, won me back to old impressions;—my thoughts ceased to wander to the pleasure-grounds of Fort-Maurice;—I was at last able to meet the glance of her deep-blue eye, without shrinking from its light, like a robber at noonday. Whether it was, that the temporary absence, by giving a degree of novelty to things around me, made any change more palpable to observation, or not, I cannot tell; but I could not divest myself of the idea, that my mother was much handsomer, and yet feebler, than I had ever seen her before. I thought it very strange that weakness should exist under the appearance of high health; yet that it did so, I could not doubt. Her motions were uneasy and constrained,—her respiration rapid and feverish. There was a vase of flowers placed in the window; something had crossed her brain to trouble it: she raised the sash with a tremulous hand, and bent her head over the gay creatures of the garden, to

Digitized by Google

inhale the passing odor. The red rays of an autumnal evening were streaming over hill and valley, waste and woodland.—Perhaps they lent a deeper glow to the colors of her cheek; for the rosiest leaf that bloomed beneath her, was pale, when compared to the single spot that burned in its centre. I drew a chair towards her, and seated myself by her side; she gazed on me with a long and mournful look. The family bible lay in the window; she desired me to read a particular portion of Scripture; if my memory deceive me not, it was the eighth chapter of Romans. I obeyed. She took my hand at the conclusion, and asked me if I would promise solemnly to cherish the recollection of these high and holy breathings of the Divine Spirit, when, it might be, that she was no longer with me. I did promise, and solemnly. 'Then, Father,' said she, 'thy will be done.' After a fit of deep abstraction, she walked slowly out of the room. The flowers over which she had bent her drooping form, were glistening with drops of dew; but they came from a purer source than the fountains of earth or air.

The bible contained a number of engravings, which I turned over with a wandering

Digitized by Google

eye and a listless hand. I heeded them not; my mind was roving through a wilderness of strange reflections. A slip of written paper falling from one of the leaves, arrested my attention;—it was in my mother's hand;—I have preserved it as a sacred relic up to the present moment. I could not then interpret its melancholy meaning—but it has long since ceased to be a mystery. The original is now lying before me; and, in copying its contents, I feel myself once more sitting in our little parlour—the bible open, where a plate represented the meeting of Jephthah and his daughter—the flowers in the window—the reapers in the corn-field—and my mother parted from my side,—though not as she has since been, —forever.

It was a poetical effusion.—I am nothing skilled in these things;—I am not sure that it possesses any merit as a composition;—but, whether or not, I think that one, loved as I was, may be excused when repeating a mother's verses. This is it, word for word:—

'I go to the land where the pure spirits dwell,
Midst bowers of beauty and bliss;—
Then why should I take an unwilling farewell
Of a false fleeting world like this?

Digitized by Google

productive. The season was unusually mild. My mother, whose strength appeared to return, made me frequently her companion in excursions through the farm and the neighbouring grounds. On one of these occasions, complaining of weariness, I led her to a rude seat, formed out of the stump of an old beech tree. The adjacent scenery was of a cast calculated to interest such as love to moralize on the changing forms of material existence; —man toiling to accumulate the golden gifts of nature, uncertain whether he should ever live to taste the fruits of his labors; the birds of the air making merry over the joys of the present hour, leaving to-morrow to provide for itself;—the yellow leaves of the quivering aspen lying in myriads on the bare and barren stubble, preaching in their desolation a sad sermon to the sons and heirs of cold mortality. My mother neglected no opportunity of inculcating a lesson of wisdom. She spoke of death, and the judgment to come. She told me, that there was nothing over which time held control worthy a serious thought; that the pleasures and pursuits of this transitory world, changed their gay complexion in the autumn of our years; and that

Digitized by Google

youth, beauty, and fortune, when the appointed season came, wasted and withered like a perishing leaf. While she continued speaking, I discerned the figure of Gerald Fitz-Maurice crossing an adjoining field in search of us. It was something singular that he should just start into view, as my mother descanted on the vanity of human happiness. I hailed him. He joined us, breathless and flushed from anxiety and haste.

'O, Walter, I have great news! We are all going to Dublin in a week. You must come home with me to-day. It may be the last time we shall ever meet together at our house.'

My heart felt sore at this intelligence, it was so sudden, so unexpected. I said nothing, but looked to my mother for an answer.

She stated, that she had no objection to my going for a *short* period with Master Fitz-Maurice, provided I obtained my father's consent.

'Where is he?' inquired Gerald. I pointed to where he stood with his laborers. The lively boy, without waiting an instant, ran in quest of him. He came back with a countenance brightened by success.

'Come, Wat; you are my property until

Digitized by Google

Sunday morning. Your father consented, on my promise that you should return for sermon. Let us away immediately ; we have no time to lose.'

My mother took an arm of each, and we walked to the house. I was soon ready for the journey. I prepared to go forth as one about to fulfil a sacred duty of friendship. I kissed my beloved parent at parting ; and she mingled a blessing with her good-bye. How happy I now am that she did so.

This was at twelve o'clock on a Friday in the month of September. Shall I ever forget it ?—Never, to my dying day !

CHAPTER XII.

As we sauntered on our way, my companion beguiled the time by a vivid description of the metropolis and its attractive scenes. The streets, the theatre, the park, the parliament house, and the vice-regal court, had each a share of his eloquence. He sketched the romantic beauties of the bay of Dublin, in the warm colors of an Arabian tale. He descri-

Digitized by Google

bed the charming valleys that lie among the Wicklow mountains, reposing by the side of their stern mates, like gentle maidens wedded to the rough sons of battle, with all the pomp and precision of a professed painter of the picturesque; ending every dissertation by a good-natured wish, that fortune would grant him the opportunity of showing me these wonders of the world, on some future day.

To my great satisfaction, there were no guests at Fort-Maurice. We indulged in all our amusements without restraint. In the evening, Gerald requested me to walk to the borders of the lake, where he promised to join me in half an hour. I did so, but the time was doubled ere he came. I made some silly jest on his stay, to which he returned no answer, but leaping into the boat, beckoned me to follow. He rowed like lightning from the shore; then, throwing down the oars, allowed the shallop to drift at random. The silken streamers played in the breeze. He watched them for a little with a bitter smile; then, tearing them down, cut them in pieces with his knife, and sprinkled the shreds upon the rippling waters. He trampled the snowy sail under foot, muttering something that

Digitized by Google

sounded like imprecation. I grew seriously alarmed. His faultless features were distorted into an expression hateful to look upon. I feared that his senses wandered. I never witnessed anything like it before. I laid my hand upon his arm.

'What ails you, Gerald?'

'Nothing, nothing: let me alone——'

'Not until you tell me what ails you. Sure you are not angry with me?'

'With you! no, no, no,—Not with you, Walter;—not with you.'

'With whom, then, dearest Gerald?'

'Do not ask me just now;—you shall hear all by and by.'—

I ceased farther question until his mood had passed away. He then explained the cause of these frightful emotions. From the time we visited the sea, he resolved on bringing me to the island, according to promise. For this purpose, he took a secret trip to the beach, and, by a liberal donation to one of the fishermen, secured the use of a small boat for our intended voyage. To-morrow was the appointed day. That very evening he applied to his mother for leave of absence. The answer he received, was the

Digitized by Google

cause of exasperating him to the pitch of fury I lately witnessed. Far from granting him permission to venture on the ocean, her maternal fears were excited, and she intimated his intention to his father, who gave him a severe reprimand, and warned him never to mention such a thing again. 'But I shall go,' said Gerald, gnawing his ruby lip, 'were she ten times our mother.'

The following day every trace of angry passion had subsided. His countenance, like a tropical sky after a storm, was as sweet and as smiling as ever. At the breakfast-table he talked incessantly, and was more than usually complaisant to his mother, who lavished on him a thousand epithets of fondness. All allusion to the late refusal and the cause of it, was carefully avoided. He craved permission, with great humility, to accompany me home at an early hour on Sunday, that he might redeem his pledge to my father. This was cheerfully granted. Lady Fitz-Maurice, by way of a cure for past grievances, added the privilege of remaining with us during the whole of that day.

At four o'clock on Sunday morning, I was awakened by some one sprinkling water on

Digitized by Google

my face. It was Gerald. He was already dressed, and caused me to hurry on my clothes, without allowing time for questions. We descended cautiously, that the family might not be disturbed. A servant waited for us in the court yard. He brought my friend a horse, equipped at all points, which he mounted, desiring me, as I was a less expert rider, to follow on Rosette. We chose the private path from the house, and proceeded at a quick pace until we reached the public road. My companion took a direction opposite to that leading to my father's. I called to him, thinking that in the misty light of the early morn he had mistaken the way. 'You are wrong, Gerald! You should turn to the right.'

He rode up to me—'I am not going to Glen-O, Walter; that is, not immediately.'

'Then where are you going?'

'Just to the sea-beach, to have one look at that dear little island, since we may not touch its forbidden soil. There is no sin, or shame, I hope, in an hour's stroll by the shore. We can return long before your presence will be wanted in the godly throng.'

Changed though I was, I did not like the tone

Digitized by Google

of mockery with which he concluded his reply; yet, seeing nothing very objectionable in his proposal, I consented to accompany him.

We left the horses with a fisherman, who seemed expecting our arrival, and roamed about the strand till the sun had fairly risen: the sea shone like a plate of polished steel, reflecting the deep hue of the azure heavens on its unruffled bosom. The countless pebbles that strewed our path sparkled like so many gems; and the lonely isle, borrowing numberless tints of beauty from the deceptive influence of sunlight and of distance, seemed a smiling home upon the deep, where the ocean-pilgrim might hope to rest in peace.

There were a number of boats moored upon the beach. One particularly caught our notice; —a staunch sea-worthy little thing, capable of holding four persons conveniently. Gerald proposed that we should take a short sail, and eat our breakfast on board, as he had brought some provisions with him. I spoke of returning homewards; but he said it was quite time enough. I had not strength of mind to resist the temptation. We put off accordingly. My companion's spirits were so highly elated, that he obstinately refused the fisherman's kind offer to assist in navigating our little vessel.

Digitized by Google

The whole affair was, I am sure, a preconcerted thing on the part of Gerald. From the moment we started, he kept rowing directly for the island; and, in spite of my feeble remonstrances, I found, at the end of an hour, that we were by its very side. My friend gave a loud shout as he leaped upon the rocky landing-place, and welcomed me to the desired spot, with an air of triumph. When I surveyed the scene from which so much had been anticipated, there appeared to me very little cause for extraordinary joy. The whole place had a bleak and barren aspect. It was a huge mass of rocks, thinly clad with seaweeds, patches of scorched grass, and the spectral forms of some blasted shrubs. Its distant loveliness was but a fantasy, false and fleeting, as the dazzling forms with which the hopes of a young heart people the wilderness of life.

We were very hungry, our appetites being stimulated by the sharp sea-breeze. There was something not unpleasant in the singularity of our situation, as we despatched our solitary meal in a cleft of the rocks. For Gerald, the wild and waste must have possessed peculiar charms, he was so happy in his new sphere. When I hinted the propriety of returning

Digitized by Google

home, he ridiculed my holy terrors, as he called them; and, skipping from cliff to cliff, amused himself by starting the sea-fowl from their haunts, and skimming with smooth pebbles the level surface of the sleeping surge. While thus employed, two fishing-boats appeared making for the island. They were filled with that description of the lower classes, who consider the Sabbath as a day set apart for revelling, and every species of profane amusement. Part of them landed, and commenced drinking, as they had, according to custom, provided a quantity of intoxicating spirits. The remainder began to fish; and, in spite of all I could say, my companion made one of their party.

'Remember, Gerald, your word is pledged.'

'So much the better, Wat; your's will not be broken.'

This was all the satisfaction I received. I left them applauding my companion's spirit, and ascended to a sheltered and secluded rock, lying in the side of a lofty crag that beetled upon the wave. For a time I was diverted, observing the varied appearance of the sea and shore, from my insulated resting-place. I soon wearied of the sameness of the

Digitized by Google

scene, and I fell into a strain of bitter reflection. Was it fitting that I should be in such a place on such a day? I dared not answer. A voice from the solitudes of the lone isle, seemed to accuse me of confederating with Gerald, to disobey our parents, and mock the sacred solemnity of a divine institution. We were Sabbath-breakers—Sabbath-breakers!—What a name for my father's son to have, and to deserve! I shuddered, as if wandering in sleep; my eyes opened on the brink of a fearful precipice. Was this a fair return for the fond affection that cherished my infancy, and watched over my youth? Was this a grateful tribute to a God of loving-kindness and of tender mercies? Oh! no. A cold damp burst over my whole frame. I went with a tottering step to seek my associate, determined, at all events, to stay no longer in this unhallowed place. The fishing party were just returned. Their friends had kindled a fire, and they assembled round it, for the purpose of making a dinner on what they caught. I told Gerald, with firmness, that here I neither could, nor would, remain a moment longer. He said, that he was both cold and hungry; but if I could muster patience to serve

Digitized by Google

me for half an hour, he would steer off as soon afterwards as I pleased. I consented to the arrangement; but refused to join in the festivity. My friend was loud in his mirth. These rude people flattered his vanity with praises of his adroitness in managing the boat. Forgetful of what was due to himself, to the day, and to common decency, he sung vain songs, prated foolishly, and was persuaded to drink a quantity of diluted spirits, as an antidote for the ill effects of the drenching sea-wave.

When we bore away from the island, how changed were my sensations since the hour in the morning, at which I gazed upon it from the shore with unqualified delight! I felt cold and comfortless. The clouds were of the darkest shade of grey,—the sea agitated by a heavy swell. It was an ebbing tide, but a smart breeze had set in fair for land. Something was wrong with Gerald. When he rowed in concert, he failed to keep time; and when he insisted on using both oars, we floundered and tossed at the caprice of the wind. As he kept alternately abusing the vessel and the weather, we espied one of the fishing-parties pushing off with all speed to

Digitized by Google

overtake us. His pride took fire. He swore, that while there was a stitch of canvass to be had, they should not be first on shore. He hoisted all our sail, and we scudded merrily before the breeze. Still our rivals gained upon us. Their boat was evidently better managed, for she was much heavier laden than ours. Gerald was exasperated. He desired me to take the oars on my knee, and balance the boat, while he trimmed the sails. I did so. He threw off his hat, and extend his tall figure to its full height. I think I yet see his beautiful proportions—the long curls of his dark hair ruffled by the gale. He caught the rope——

'Here 's a long pull—a strong pull—and a pull altogether.—The devil 's in the dice, if we don't beat them now.'

I heard no more. A gust of wind took the sails fairly abreast,—in an instant we were dashed into the ocean. The oars were the saving of my life. I held one of them with a death-grasp. Ages appeared to roll over me while driven on the billows. The spray splashed in my face. I heard like the roaring of many cataracts, but could see nothing. At that moment I felt neither hope nor

Digitized by Google

fear,—instinct alone was all that lived within me.—Nature at length gave way. I could hold out no longer. The oars slipped from my benumbed fingers. Of what succeeded that time of horror, I have no remembrance.

I learned afterwards, that the people on the island, observing our unsteady motions, put off to our assistance. They reached us in a few minutes after the boat was overturned.—They succeeded in picking up me, without either sense or animation. A messenger was despatched to our respective parents, while every means that could be devised were tried to awaken the principle of life that lay slumbering in my exhausted frame. The breath was indeed recalled, but I was carried home dreadfully ill, in a state of absolute delirium.

'Gerald! late as it is in the evening of my days, when the memory of past griefs has faded—even now, would I, if possible, pass over thy untimely destiny in silence. That buoyant and beautiful form, on which thy fond mother doted, never gladdened her expecting eyes again. She might take many a long look from the lofty windows, before she would again see her darling, bounding over

Digitized by Google

the green sward, like a young deer, to meet her call. Thou wert gone—gone—gone. The tree of thy proud race was shorn of its loveliest blossom; thy father's princely fortune was fated to adorn a stranger's name. Why is there yet one vacant place among the tombs of thine ancestors? It is a vain and empty show: the guest it waits for, will never return to grace it. The spirit of Gerald was restless when in life—in death he possessed a troubled grave.—He was sepulchred among the waters—among the wild, weary, wasting, wandering waters.'

The unfortunate boy was seen to swim for a few seconds after the fatal accident occurred. They strained hard to save him, but they came too late. He was borne off by the waves of an ebbing sea. The pale son of the poor pastor of Glen-O was preserved. The blooming heir of the wealthy house of Fitz-Maurice was gone forever.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

'I CAN hardly believe it! can it be possible that I am once again at home? at my own dear home, after such a long, long night of dreadful suffering. My lips still smack of the salt sea! 'T is not strange that this poor frame feels feeble.—Many a strong man perished in that storm. Their dying cries yet vibrate in my ears. O, it was horrible to witness.—I would not be a mariner for worlds!—to see those ugly monsters of the deep, striving which should be first upon them.—Ah! God help them, their's is a wretched fate!——

'Speak to me, Gerald.—You have slept enough.—It will steal all the pretty roses from your cheek.—Say your prayers, boy; we have had a marvellous escape.—They have put us in one bed, you see, that we may keep each other warm.—We had need of that!—Gerald!—Gerald!—Gerald!—Why do n't you speak to me?'

'Lie quiet, child, and be at peace; you are too weak to rise.'

'You say the truth, old lady; but where is Gerald?'

Digitized by Google

'The doctor will be here directly;—he will tell you all.'

'Well then, I'll close my eyes until he comes.—Good morrow, sir!—I have seen you with my mother.—Why is she not here?—I have a long story for her.—I remember she opened the door for us in her night-gown.—We disturbed her, but you know we could not help it.—Let her lie still.—She is sickly, and requires rest.—But where is Gerald?'

'Gerald is gone home.'

'Ay, to his father's.—I did not think of that.—They'll be glad to see him.—Is it time to rise, doctor?'

'Not yet, my dear.—Drink this. It will take the salt taste off your lips.'

'Will it?—Then here goes.—O doctor, if you had seen that storm!'

The following day reason returned in full force, and with it a perfect consciousness of misery. I was awakened by the song of the redbreast above my window. At its simple note, a crowd of recollections throbbed upon my brain. The thing I had been, and the thing I was, stood side by side. The contrast was most painful. I knew the face of my attendant, and addressed her by name. She

Digitized by Google

appeared pleased and surprised.—'How long have I been lying, Martha?'

'This is the sixteenth day, and I thought you never would have lived to see it: but the Lord has been most merciful.'

'He has indeed. Do not deceive me now.—Is not Gerald Fitz-Maurice dead?'

The old woman looked at me steadily. She saw I was quite composed.—'Yes,' she answered, 'he is dead.'

'How is my mother?—Why is she not with me?'

'She is ill, and confined to her room.'

'No wonder,—no wonder.—I know who is to blame for that.—Martha,—Martha,—I have been a wicked son!—But my father and Mary?'

'Mary is at farmer Williamson's.—Your father visits you every hour.—You may expect him soon.'

'Soon!—How soon?—I would not meet him now—not just now, dear Martha.'

'Here he comes!' she cried; and he entered the apartment.

I had not time to cover my face with the clothes, and was compelled, however unwillingly, to look upon my father. He appeared

Digitized by Google

to have borne a full share in the troubles of these distressful days. He was as one on whom the hand of sorrow had pressed heavily; yet his grief seemed to have been more on account of others' suffering than his own.—Never before did he express himself to me with the same ardor of affection that he did at that instant, when I trembled before him, a guilty agent in a wide scene of wo. He placed his arm under my head, and raised me up, that I might breathe with the greater freedom. He spoke words full of comfort and consolation. He praised the God of all grace and mercy, that restored to him his dear, though erring son. He trusted that the affliction with which it pleased Him to visit us, would become sanctified to our use, and remain as a blessing.

'Be of good cheer, Walter!—Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'

I could not restrain my feelings. I threw myself on his bosom, and exclaimed, in the words of the Prodigal,—'Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!' After humbling myself before him, I was relieved, greatly relieved.

Digitized by Google

On the bed of sickness, I had leisure to think upon the past. The scales fell from my eyes. I saw, with a perfect vision, the wreck that low desires and a wretched vanity made of the better principles and habits of my youth. Until the hour that I mingled in the dissipations of Fort-Maurice, I was happy. At that hour, my guardian angel abandoned me. A proud, ungrateful, sensual demon usurped his place. Peace and purity fled together. I no longer drank from a limpid stream of untainted joy. I courted intemperance in a loathsome mixture of mud and wine. Pride drugged the cup, and folly gulped it down. Thoughts and emotions, as turbid as the baleful draught, banished the consoling quiet of conscious rectitude. I was near becoming a lost and ruined boy—a false and forsaken thing. False to my parents and their precepts, forsaken of God and of myself. I beseeched the Lord, with my whole soul, that I might be forgiven; that he would not rebuke me in his great indignation. I sought the assistance of the Divine Spirit, to enable me to keep the vow that I now made solemnly and sincerely, to do so no more. That vow was ratified—fearfully ratified. Death was its witness, and a breaking heart its seal.

Digitized by Google

Until I was quite recovered, my thoughtful and loving father would not permit me to leave my room. I grew very uneasy about my mother, who, Martha informed me, still remained unwell. The day my confinement terminated, I longed impatiently to see her. The old woman opposed my wishes. She said, that, in her present precarious state, the shock of my appearance might be too much for her to bear. My father did not join in her observations; but this was quite enough. Nothing could induce me to intrude on her, should but her little finger be caused to ache at my presence. When evening arrived, I wrapped myself up closely, and stole out alone to meditate and mourn.

I took the private path leading to the school-house and my father's chapel. The hum of the village reached not this lone track. Everything around was still. I heard nought louder than the fitful beatings of my feverish bosom. The soft maternal breath of even was most grateful to my oppressed spirit. It came like balm upon my brow and brain. Sorrow sighed itself to sleep, and tears, more sweet than bitter, rolled from my eyes in a silent stream.

Digitized by Google

I found myself, almost without knowing how I came to be there, leaning against a wild plum-tree in our secluded burial-ground. I liked the spot. A tall thick hedge, rising immediately behind, divided it from the farm-fields, and screened the loiterer from all observation. My name was carved upon the trunk of that old tree. It reminded me of other and happier times. I clasped my right arm around it, and pressed my colorless cheek close to its hoary stem. There was a new-made grave at my very foot. As I bent over it, sad and sorrow stricken, I might have represented Memory weeping at the tomb of Love. I heard the sound of approaching footsteps. It came from the other side of the hedge. 'T was the laborers returning from the fields. They had toiled hard, and yet their hearts were lighter far than mine. They drew nearer. They pronounced my name often and earnestly. I held in my breath, and listened. What could it be? They were just behind me.—I could not mistake a single word.

'She 's eight days buried, you say?'

'Just eight.—She lies on the opposite side. —We had some trouble digging the grave

Digitized by Google

among the plum-tree roots. 'T is a tough soil, that same.'

'Everybody speaks well of her.—She was a good woman, I believe.'

'That she was—Pity she died so young. —The master says she was but three and thirty.—Och! he's the sorry man that she's gone.'

'Is n't the son going too?'

'So they say.—It 's no great matter, any way. —Sir John will never let him live in peace, after drowning his heir. No wonder; for he was as handsome as a lady.'

''T was the news of that killed his mother.'

'Ay, a boy came running from the beach when her husband was at prayers, and told a terrible story about her son being drowned with young Fitz-Maurice. She had been poorly for a long time, and this finished her. She died in a day or two afterwards.—The poor will miss her sorely.'

'And so will her husband—the minister.—Yes, he was very fond of her.—Heaven help him!—Amen, amen!'

Powers of mercy! this was my mother's grave!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

No—no—no!—it would have been vain, very vain! There is not a language spoken by man, could express what passed within me, before and after the dark and dismal hour, when they bore me from the cold sod, wet with the dews of the night, and the damps of the grave. For a grievous sin, I suffered a grievous chastisement. Worse than death followed; far worse, for those to look upon that loved me. A cloud came over my intellect. My existence was a blank among thinking beings. I knew no one—not even my own father. I lived in a world of phantoms; and, what is rather strange, I remember all the airy creations of my unquiet brain, as vividly as if they were the foremost facts of real existence. Nero was, from my classical readings, familiar to me as a monster. It was the curse of my imagination, to couple me with him. The spirit of the savage Roman was by my side from morning to night, hooting, and mocking, and grinning. 'I too have slain my mother!' was the hideous cry. We were mated as destroyers. It was the very cunning of my

Digitized by Google

dreadful destiny, that I should thus be united to a fiend of blood.

This could not always last. Care, attention, and, above all, youth, at length dissipated the horrid dream. I could once again see things as they really were. Providence, in his mercy, restored me to the full use of my senses; but the vigor of health, and the fire of a young spirit, were gone, to return no more. Even now I am subject, on any excitement, to those nervous affections, which, for months and years, would, from the slightest causes, produce tears and tremblings. My father,—my dear—my kind—my good father, omitted nothing that human ingenuity or affection could devise, to wile me from the society of sorrow. The poor old master visited me every day. He revived my tase for astronomy and mathematical science. Every exertion was made to encourage me to persevere, and they succeeded. I became devoted to those sweet and solitary studies, that tend, above all others, to keep the eye fixed upon its God. I could now live alone, without being lonely. I wore the precious gift of my departed parent in my bosom, and I engraved its precepts on my heart. I read no human comment on its text; but, in the

Digitized by Google

works of the Almighty, I sought an explanation of his word. I gazed through a vista of endless worlds; I sought to comprehend the laws that regulate the universe. The little I learned, only made me long for more. My soul grew into one intense and passionate feeling of boundless adoration. I laid down my burden of sin and shame at the foot of the Redeemer, and offered up the incense of an enraptured spirit to that mighty and mysterious Being, who, even in the sublimity of exhaustless spheres, vast, varied, and all-beautiful, has but portrayed poor, pale, and passing emblems of his power, purity, and perfection.

To a common observer, my father would appear nothing altered by his beloved partner's death. His countenance wore its accustomed expression of stillness and serenity. In all his trials, a murmur never passed his lips. He walked calmly on his way, and blessed his God. Yet there was that in his manner, which, though it might escape the multitude, escaped not me. There was a devotedness in all he did, like a stranger conforming himself to the customs of a foreign land, as a thing that must and should be,—yet pleased with the thought that an hour was coming to

Digitized by Google

set him free. With him life was endured, but not enjoyed. His eye was fixed on something beyond its precincts; and the mournful melody of his touching tones came on the ear, like echoes from the hollow cells that the dropping of a constant grief wears in a breaking heart. The folly, or cruelty, of Sir John Fitz-Maurice, made him a persecuted man. His lady insisted that the son of the canting hypocrite, as she called my father, was the cause of her Gerald's untimely end. She vowed never to sleep a night under the same roof with her husband, if he did not banish the nest of impostors from the bounds of his estate. As far as his power extended, she was obeyed. We saw our house and farm pass into other hands; yet what was intended as an injury was perhaps an act of kindness;—we had there too many memorials of my mother. We were prohibited from entering the chapel grounds, to meet our Maker, where his praises had been celebrated for upwards of fifty years. Tyranny did its worst. Even that was ineffectual to complete its object. The pastor found for his children another home—for his people, another tabernacle;—and I hope God has forgiven them that made the change necessary,

Digitized by Google

It had been my father's wish, and my own, that I should fill the ministerial profession; but my broken constitution, and our embarrassed circumstances, rendered the project impracticable. He enjoyed, however, the satisfaction of seeing me settled in a situation both pleasant and profitable, before he died. I was appointed astronomer to the Archiepiscopal Observatory at A——. It was the very thing best calculated to make me easy, as in it my pleasures and pursuits were identified. My sister came to live with me, after his decease. He did not long survive my mother. In the arms of his children he breathed his last. His dying words were in pity for us who were to remain behind;—as for himself, he felt like a prisoner about to be set free. He was a bright example of the value of a life spent in communion with God. When the hour that tries all hearts approached, he passed from among us, smiling with faith and hope. No hollow bell told the world that he was gone—no proud cavalcade of tearless mourners mocked his poor remains—no plumed hearse bore his unconscious dust. Those that loved him in life, carried him to his last home. His memory was not forced upon posterity by the

Digitized by Google

tricks of the hireling sculptor, or the rhymes of the paltry versifier. It was cherished where it would not soon be forgotten,—in the affections of his people,—in the hearts of his children. The memorial he left behind him was, a 'conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.'

My father's death did not oppress my spirit, as like occurrences had previously done. Grief prepared me for it,—for anything. At all events, there was nothing in it to shock the sense. Dissolution witnessed no change in him. His manner was still mild and tranquil. If there was any difference, his tones were less melancholy, and his looks more cheerful. I can compare his departure to nothing that resembles it so closely, as the setting of the sun, on one of those clear-obscure evenings, when summer is on the wane.

There was ever a strong attachment between my sister and me. It was right that it should be so; but these things do not always follow because they are right. Mary was a good and gentle girl, and proved to me a treasure. She had an intuitive knowledge of everything that could add to my comfort; and in reducing her knowledge to practice, she evidently took

Digitized by Google

great delight. I was subject to fits of melancholy—and perhaps sometimes disposed to be fretful and capricious; illness will often do these things in spite of us—but Mary's patience and playfulness were not to be exhausted. She pleased me out of all my little humors, as if I were a petted child; and she can tell if I proved sufficiently grateful for her kindness. We lived in a little world of our own, where we were all in all to each other, and we sought for nothing beyond it. Among the many I was forced to meet in the discharge of my official duties, I formed but one friendship. It was for a young man of worth, learning and abilities, an unappointed clergyman of our faith. He came to see us very often. I encouraged his visits, for he was of a serious cast, and half an enthusiast in my favorite science. In the end, he became attached to my sister, and consulted me on the subject. I reflected on my vacillating health. I pictured to myself how lonely and unprotected she would be, were I to be called suddenly away. I broke the affair to Mary. She acknowledged that she entertained a high esteem for our friend; but she could not think of leaving me alone among those who knew not how to

Digitized by Google

supply her place. She said her mind was made up to live and die with me. I was determined never again to sacrifice those I loved, to feelings merely selfish. I reasoned with her, and at length prevailed. My friend was called to a congregation; and I had the satisfaction of giving her in trust to one, every way disposed, and every way calculated, to make her happy.

Only for occasional attacks of illness, my occupation would have proved exceedingly pleasant. I succeeded in making myself known among literary people, and cultivated a correspondence with a few characters, equally eminent for piety and talent. But confinement and great mental exertion were gradually eating away the remnants of a corroded constitution. I was a martyr to headache and exhaustion. My finances would not permit me to follow the counsel of my medical adviser, who recommended a journey to a warmer clime. I therefore resigned myself to the great Author of events, contented to live or die, as it pleased him to dispose of me. One morning, as I was earnestly engaged, attempting to calculate the parallax of a fixed star, I received a letter with a huge black seal, ad-

Digitized by Google

dressed to Walter Ferguson, Esq. The color of the wax led me to imagine something evil. I had a nervous attack, and a considerable time elapsed before I could summon resolution to read its contents; when I did, they ran as follows :—

'SIR,

'As the executor to the will of your late 'grandfather, Walter Maxwell, Esq. of A——, 'I have to acquaint you that, being the only 'son of his daughter, Mary Maxwell, other-'wise Ferguson, you are the sole heir to all 'his large property, real and personal. You 'may not be aware that you succeed to the in-'heritance in consequence of the demise of 'your two uncles—one of whom died of the 'yellow fever in the West Indies, the other 'perished at sea on his return home.

'The affairs of the estate craving your im-'mediate presence, I request that you will ap-'point a time and place, for conferring on 'matters of business, without delay.

'I am, Sir, your humble servant,
'at command,
'JONATHAN WILSON.'

Digitized by Google

I met Mr Wilson according to his request, and, accustomed as he was to the details of business, I astonished him no little, by the coolness with which I treated the whole matter. I found myself rich beyond all that I ever calculated or cared for. I was the undisputed master of sixty thousand pounds. To my limited views, such a fortune appeared inexhaustible; yet I was nothing elated by its possession. There were just three things which I rejoiced to think I should now have the means of compassing,—my sister's perfect independence,—the possession of a library and observatory of my own,—and a trip to some part of the continent, for the benefit of my health. Lest the remedy should come too late, I proceeded on my tour as soon as circumstances admitted. I visited every place of note in France and Italy. My love for nature returned in its first force, and it was amply gratified, while contemplating the glorious scenery of the Rhone, the Loire, the Po, and the Arno. I mingled also as a spectator in what is termed fashionable life; but here I did not experience a similar satisfaction. In those shining circles, I met with little save what was heartless and hollow, and I came back with a

Digitized by Google

keener zest, to my native country and my sister's fireside.

This is the month of August. On yesterday I completed my fortyfifth year. I did more; I closed the purchase of the Glen-O estate with the heir of Sir John Fitz-Maurice. The place is much altered since we left it—I can hardly imagine that it is the same. Yet it is still dear, very dear to me. What changes I have witnessed in my short span of life! I am now a master, in the very room, where I sat a trembling and unhonored guest.—Yonder lies the fairy lake and its temple among the willows;—but where is the pretty boat, and the beautiful form that ruled its motions?—Does that heart-stirring laugh still echo through the grove?—Gerald!—Gerald!—Who answers to my call?—Pshaw! 't was the hills that returned my own words, as if sent on a bootless errand.—Poor boy! poor boy!—These nerves are at work again—I am sick and faint!—

Yes,—I will rebuild the home of my youth. Its last owner must have been either an oppressed, or an indolent man. The roof has entirely fallen in—the rank grass and the foul weeds riot in our garden!—Of all the flowers

Digitized by Google

and fruit-trees, there remain but a few scattered daisies, and some barren bushes of the gooseberry. Well! time that ruins can also restore. My sister has two blooming boys, and I shall teach them to plant where I have planted, and they shall live where I have lived. The chapel must be restored, and the school-house. I shall seek out some one that resembles my own old master, to instruct the village children. Fort-Maurice too shall not be neglected. I will attend to its improvement like a faithful steward, holding it in trust for the sons of my dear Mary. They have a father and a mother such as I had. They shall learn to know their value, and obey them better than I did mine. I 'll read them every day a lesson, from the scenes of my errors and my misfortunes.

My time on earth will be but short—I feel it, and I know it. It appears to me wonderful that I have weathered it so well. My years might have been longer in the land, had I honored my parents as I ought to have done: they would most certainly have been much happier. I have sufficient warning to set my house in order: let me be watchful that the last hour may not have the most to do.

Digitized by Google

To those who follow after me, and who m a perchance profit by my experience, I have to say, with the sincerity of one that must soon renounce this world,—that I never yet had a happy moment, when I was not obedient to the laws of God, and that I can attribute the sufferings of my whole existence to no other cause, than the few but fatal follies of my Early Days.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google